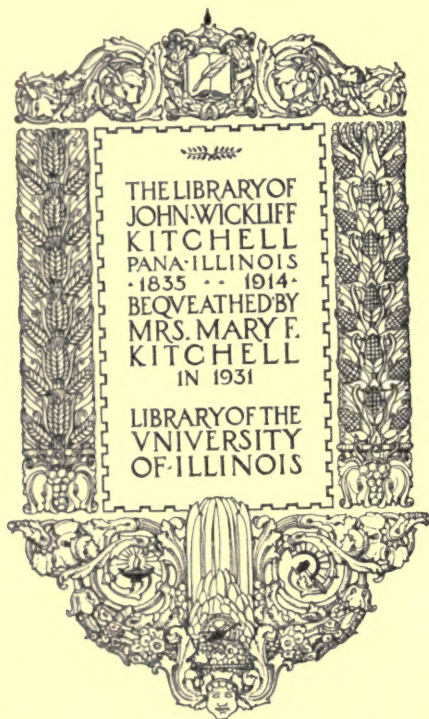


HANS OF ICELAND

VICTOR HUGO

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HANS OF ICELAND

BY

VICTOR HUGO

TRANSLATED BY A. LANGDON ALGER

ILLUSTRATED BY A. DÉMAREST



BOSTON
ESTES AND LAURIAT

1891

ÉDITION DE LUXE

Limited to five hundred copies, of which this is

No.

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University Press

JOHN WILSON AND SON, CAMBRIDGE

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1831

INTRODUCTION.

"HANS of Iceland" is the work of a young man, — a very young man.

As we read it, we see clearly that the eighteen-year old boy who wrote "Hans of Iceland" during a fever fit in 1821 had no experience of men or things, no experience of ideas, and that he was striving to divine all this.

Every intellectual effort, be it drama, poem, or romance, must contain three ingredients, — what the author has felt, what he has observed, and what he has divined.

In a romance particularly, if it is to be a good one, there must be plenty of feeling and plenty of observation; and those things which are divined must be derived logically, simply, and with no solution of continuity, from those things which are observed and felt.

If we apply this law to "Hans of Iceland," we shall readily grasp the chief defect of the book.

There is but one thing felt in "Hans of Iceland," the young man's love; but one thing observed, the young girl's love. All the rest is a matter of divination, — that is, of invention; for youth, having neither facts nor experience nor models behind it, can only divine by means of its imagination. "Hans of Iceland," therefore, admitting that it deserves classification, is hardly more than a fanciful romance.

When a man's prime is past, when his head is bowed, when he feels compelled to write something more than

strange stories to frighten old women and children, when all the rough edges of youth are worn away by the friction of life, he realizes that every invention, every creation, every artistic divination, must be based upon study, observation, meditation, science, measure, comparison, serious reflection, attentive and constant imitation of Nature, conscientious self-criticism; and the inspiration evolved from these new conditions, far from losing anything, gains broader influence and greater strength. The poet then realizes his true aim. All the vague revery of his earlier years is crystallized, as it were, and converted into thought. This second period of life is usually that of an artist's greatest works. Still young, and yet mature, — this is the precious phase, the intermediate and culminating point, the warm and radiant hour of noon, the moment when there is the least possible shade, and the most light. There are supreme artists who maintain this height all their lives, despite declining years. These are the sovereign geniuses. Shakespeare and Michael Angelo left the impress of youth upon some of their works, the traces of age on none.

To return to the story of which a new edition is now to be published: Such as it is, with its abrupt and breathless action, its characters all of a piece, its barbarous and bungling mannerism, its supercilious and awkward form, its undisguised moods of revery, its varied hues thrown together haphazard with no thought of pleasing the eye, its crude, harsh, and shocking style, utterly destitute of skill or shading, with the countless excesses of every kind committed almost unwittingly throughout, this book represents with tolerable accuracy the period of life at which it was written, and the particular condition of the soul, the imagination, and the heart of a youth in love for the first time, when the commonplace and ordinary obstacles of life are converted into imposing and poetic impediments, when his head is full of heroic fancies which glorify him in his own

estimation, when he is already a man in two or three directions, and still a child in a score of others, when he has read Ducray-Duminil at eleven years of age, Auguste la Fontaine at thirteen, Shakespeare at sixteen,—a strange and rapid scale, which leads abruptly, in the matter of literary taste, from the silly to the sentimental, from the sentimental to the sublime.

We give this book back to the world in 1833 as it was written in 1821, because we feel that the work, ingenuous, if nothing else, gives a tolerably faithful picture of the age that produced it.

Moreover, the author, small as may be his place in literature, having undergone the common fate of every writer, great or small, and seen his first works exalted at the expense of the latest, and having heard it declared that he was far from having fulfilled the promise of his youth, deems it his duty, not to oppose to a criticism, perhaps wise and just, objections which might seem suspicious from his lips, but to reprint his first works simply and literally as he wrote them, that his readers may decide, so far as he is concerned, whether it be a step forward or backward that divides “Hans of Iceland” from “Nôtre-Dame de Paris.”

PARIS, May, 1833.

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION.

THE author of this work, from the day he wrote its first page to the day when he placed the happy word "End" at the bottom of the last page, was a prey to the most absurd illusion. Fancying that a composition in four parts deserved some consideration, he wasted his time in seeking a fundamental idea, in working it out, well or ill, according to a plan good or bad, as the case may be, in arranging scenes, combining effects, studying manners and customs as best he might,—in a word, he took his work seriously.

It is only now, when, as it is the wont of authors to end where the reader begins, he was about to elaborate a long preface, which should be the shield of his work, and contain, together with a statement of the moral and literary principles upon which his conception rests, a more or less hasty sketch of the various historical events which it embraces, and a more or less clear picture of the country in which the scene is laid,—it is only now, I say, that he perceives his error; that he recognizes all the insignificance and all the frivolity of the species of work in behalf of which he has so solemnly spoiled so much paper, and that he feels how strangely he was misled when he persuaded himself that this romance was indeed, up to a certain point, a literary production, and that these four fragments formed a book.

He therefore sagely resolved, after making a proper apology, to say nothing at all in this so-called preface,

which the publisher will consequently be careful to print in large letters. He will not tell the reader his name or surname, whether he be old or young, married or a bachelor; whether he has written elegies or fables, odes or satires; whether he means to write tragedies, dramas, or comedies; whether he be the patrician member of some great literary association, or whether he holds a position upon some newspaper, — all things, however, which it would be very interesting to know. He confines himself to stating that the picturesque part of his story has been the object of his especial care; that K's, Y's, H's, and W's abound in it, although he uses these romantic letters with extreme temperance, witness the historic name of Guldenlew, which some chroniclers write Guldenloewe, — a liberty which he has not ventured to allow himself; that there will also be found numerous diphthongs varied with much taste and elegance; and finally, that each chapter is preceded by a strange and mysterious motto, which adds singularly to the interest and gives more expressiveness to each part of the composition.

JANUARY, 1823.

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

THE author has been informed that a brief preface or introduction to this second edition of his book is absolutely essential. In vain he declared that the four or five paragraphs which escorted the first edition, and with which the publisher persisted in disfiguring it, had already drawn down upon his head the anathemas of one of the most distinguished and honorable of French writers,¹ who accused him of assuming the sour tones of the illustrious Jedediah Cleishbotham, schoolmaster and sexton of the parish of Gandereleugh; in vain he alleged that this brilliant and sensible critic, from dealing severely with an error, would doubtless become merciless, upon a repetition of the same mistake, — in a word, he presented countless equally good reasons for declining to fall into the trap; but better ones must have been brought to bear against them, since he is now writing a second preface, after so bitterly repenting that he wrote the first. While executing this bold resolve, his first thought was to open the second edition with those general and particular views on the subject of romance-writing with which he dared not burden the first. Lost in meditations on this literary and didactic treatise, he was still a prey to that strange intoxication of composition, that brief instant when the author, feeling that he is about to grasp an ideal perfection which, alas, he can never reach, is thrilled with delight at his task; he was, we say, enjoying that period of

¹ M. Charles Nodier, in the "*Quotidienne*" for March 12, 1828.

mental ecstasy when labor is a delight, when the secret possession of the muse seems sweeter than the dazzling pursuit of fame, when one of his wisest friends waked him suddenly from his dream, his ecstasy, his intoxication, by assuring him that several very great, popular, and influential men of letters considered the dissertation which he was preparing utterly flat, insipid, and unnecessary; that the painful apostleship of criticism with which they were charged in various public pages, imposing upon them the mournful duty of pitilessly hunting down the monster of "romanticism" and bad taste, they were even then busily preparing for certain enlightened and impartial journals a conscientious, analytical, and spicy criticism of the aforesaid forthcoming dissertation. Upon hearing this terrible news, the poor author *obstupuit; steterantque comæ, et cox faucibus harsit*, — that is to say, nothing remained but to leave in the limbo whence he was about to rescue it the essay, "virgin and yet unborn," as Jean Jacques Rousseau has it, of which such just and such severe critics had fallen foul. His friend advised him to replace it by a few simple preliminary remarks from the publishers, as he could very properly put into those gentlemen's mouths all the sweet nothings which so delicately tickle an author's ear; nay, he even offered him certain models, taken from highly successful works, some beginning with the words, "The immense popular success of this book," etc.; others thus, "The European fame which this work has won," etc.; or, "It is now superfluous to praise this book, since popular opinion declares that no praise can equal its merit," etc. Although these various formulæ, according to the discreet adviser, were not without their attested virtues, the author did not feel sufficient humility and paternal indifference to expose his work to the disappointment or the demands of the reader who should peruse these magnificent apologies, nor sufficient effrontery to imitate those rustic mountebanks who attract the curious pub-

lie by displaying a painted crocodile upon a curtain, behind which, on paying their fee, they find nothing but a lizard. He therefore rejected the idea of sounding his own praises through the obliging lips of his publishers. His friend then suggested that he should put into the mouth of his villanous Icelandic outlaw, by way of a passport, phrases suited to popularize him and render him congenial with the age, — such as delicate jests directed against the nobility, bitter sarcasms upon the clergy, ingenious invectives against nuns, monks, and other monsters of the social order. The author asked nothing better; but it scarcely seemed to him that nobles and monks had any very direct connection with the work in hand. He might, it is true, have borrowed other colors from the same palette, and thrown together a few highly philanthropic pages, in which — always keeping at a prudent distance from the dangerous shoals hidden under the waters of philosophy, and known as the shoals of the Court of Misdemeanors — he might have advanced certain of those truths discovered by the wise for the glory of mankind and the consolation of the dying; namely, that man is but a brute, that the soul is a gas of greater or less density, and that God is nothing; but he thought these incontestable truths very trivial and very hackneyed, and he could scarcely add a drop to the deluge of reasonable morality, atheistic religion, maxims, doctrines, and principles with which we have been flooded for our good for thirty years, in so monstrous a fashion that we might, if it be not irreverent, apply Regnier's verses on a shower, —

“From out the clouds the rains in such vast torrents pour,
That thirsty dogs can drink and not their foreheads lower.”

Moreover, these lofty themes had no very visible connection with the subject of his story, and he might have been puzzled to find any bond of union leading up to it, although the art of transitions has been singularly

simplified, since so many great men have discovered the secret of passing from a stable to a palace direct, and of exchanging without incongruity the policeman's cap for the civic crown.

Recognizing, therefore, that neither his talent nor his learning, "neither his wings nor his beak," as the ingenious Arab poet has it, could furnish him with a preface which would interest his readers, the author resolved merely to offer them a serious and frank account of the improvements introduced in this second edition.

He must first inform them that the words "second edition" are incorrect, and that the term "first edition" should really be applied to this reprint, inasmuch as the four variously sized bundles of grayish paper blotted with black and white, which the indulgent public has hitherto kindly consented to consider as the four volumes of "Hans of Teeland," were so disfigured with typographic errors by a barbarous printer that the wretched author, on looking over his own production, altered as it was beyond all recognition, was perpetually subjected to the torments of a father whose child returns to him mutilated and tattooed by the hand of an Iroquois from Lake Ontario.

For instance, the type turned a "lion's" voice into a "line," robbed the Dovrefield Mountains of their "peaks" and bestowed upon them "feet," and when the Norse fishers hoped to moor their boat in various "creeks," the printer drove them upon "bricks." Not to weary the reader, the author will pass by in silence all the outrages of this kind which his wounded memory recalls, —

"Manet alto in pectore vulnus."

Suffice it to say that there is no grotesque image, no strange meaning, no absurd idea, no confused figure, no burlesque hieroglyph, which the sedulously stupid ignorance of this enigmatical proof-reader did not make him utter. Alas!

every one who ever printed a dozen lines, were it only an invitation to a wedding or a funeral, will feel the deep bitterness of such a sorrow !

The proofs of this reprint have accordingly been read with sedulous care ; and the author now ventures to hope, in which he is sustained by one or two close friends, that this romance *redivivus* is worthy to figure among those splendid writings before which “the eleven stars bow low, as before the sun and moon.”¹

Should journalists accuse him of making no corrections, he will take the liberty of sending them the proof-sheets of this regenerate work, blackened by minute scrutiny ; for it is averred that there is more than one doubting Thomas among them.

The kindly reader will also observe that several dates have been corrected, historical notes added, one or two chapters enriched with new mottoes, — in a word, he will find on every page changes whose extreme importance is to be measured only by that of the entire book.

An impertinent adviser desired a translation in foot-notes of all the Latin phrases with which the learned Spiagudry sprinkles the book, “for the comprehension,” adds this personage, “of those masons, tinkers, or hairdressers who edit certain journals wherein ‘Hans of Iceland’ may chance to be reviewed.” The author’s anger at such insidious counsel may be imagined. He instantly begged to inform the would-be joker that all journalists, without distinction, are mirrors of courtesy, wisdom, and good faith, and requested him not to insult him by believing him to be one of those ungrateful citizens who are ever ready to address those dictators of taste and genius in this poor verse of an old poet, —

“Keep your own skins, my friends, nor other folk condemn,”

¹ Koran.

for he is far from thinking that the lion's skin is not the true skin of those popular gentlemen.

Still another friend implored him — for he must conceal nothing from his readers — to put his name on the titlepage of this story, hitherto the neglected child of an unknown father. It must be owned that beyond the pleasure of seeing the half-dozen capital letters which spell out one's name printed in fine black characters upon smooth white paper, there is also a certain charm in displaying it in solitary grandeur upon the back of the cover, as if the work which it adorns, far from being the only monument of the author's genius, were but one of the columns in the imposing temple wherein his genius is some day to spread its wings, but a slight specimen of his hidden talent and his unpublished glory. It proves that at least he hopes to be a noted and admired writer some day. To triumph over this fresh temptation, the author was forced to muster all his fears lest he should never break through the crowd of scribblers who, even though they waive their anonymity, must ever remain unknown.

As for the hint thrown out by certain amateurs with very delicate ears regarding the uncouth harshness of his Norwegian names, he considers it well founded. He therefore proposes, so soon as he shall be made a member of the Royal Society at Stockholm or the Bergen Academy, to invite the Norwegians to change their language, inasmuch as the hideous jargon which they are whimsical enough to employ wounds the ears of Parisian ladies, and their outlandish names, as rugged as their rocks, produce the same effect upon the sensitive tongue that utters them, as their bear's grease and bark bread would probably have upon the delicate nervous filaments of our palate.

It only remains for him to thank the few persons who have been good enough to read his book through, as is proved by the really tremendous success which it has won ;

he also expresses his gratitude to those of his fair readers who, he is assured, have formed a certain ideal of the author of "Hans of Iceland" from his book; he is vastly flattered that they should attribute to him red hair, a shaggy beard, and fierce eyes; he is overcome with confusion that they should condescend to do him the honor to suppose that he never cuts his nails; but he entreats them on his knees to rest assured that he never carries his ferocity so far as to devour little children alive; moreover, all these facts will become fixed when his renown has reached the level of that of the authors of "Lolotte and Fanfan" or of "Monsieur Botte," — men of transcendent genius, twins alike in talent and in taste, *arcades ambo*; and when his portrait, *terribiles visu formæ*, and his biography, *domestica facta*, are prefixed to his works.

He was about to close this long epistle, when his publisher, on the point of sending the book to the reviews, requested that he would add a few complimentary notices of his own work, adding, to remove all the author's scruples, that "his writing should not be the means of compromising him, as he would copy these articles himself." This last remark struck the author as extremely touching. Since it seems that in this most luminous age every man considers it his duty to enlighten his neighbor as to his own qualities and personal perfections, concerning which none can be so well informed as their possessor, as, moreover, this last temptation is a strong one, the author thinks it his duty, in case he should yield to it, to warn the public not to believe more than half of what the press may say of his work.

APRIL, 1823.

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HANS OF ICELAND



HANS OF ICELAND.



I.

Did you see it ? did you see it ? did you see it ? Oh ! did you see it ?—
Who saw it ? Who did see it ! For mercy's sake, who saw it ?

STERNE : *Tristram Shandy.*

“THAT’S what comes of falling in love, Neighbor Niels. Poor Guth Stersen would not be stretched out yonder on that great black slab, like a starfish forgotten by the tide, if she had kept her mind on mending her father’s boat and patching his nets. Saint Usuph, the fisher, console our old friend in his affliction !”

“And her lover,” added a shrill, tremulous voice, “Gill Stadt, that fine young man beside her, would not be there now, if instead of making love to Guth and seeking his

luck in those accursed Roeraas mines, he had stayed at home and rocked his little brother's cradle, under the smoky cross-beams of his mother's hut."

Neighbor Niels, whom the first speaker addressed, interrupted: "Your memory is growing old along with yourself, Mother Olly. Gill never had a brother, and that makes poor Widow Stadt's grief all the harder to bear, for her home is now left utterly desolate; if she looks up to heaven for consolation, she sees nought but her old roof, where still hangs the cradle of her son, grown to be a tall young man, and dead."

"Poor mother!" replied old Olly, "it was the young man's own fault. Why should he go to Roeraas to be a miner?"

"I do believe," said Niels, "that those infernal mines rob us of a man for every escalin's¹ worth of copper which we get out of them. What do you think, Father Braal?"

"Miners are fools," replied the fisherman. "If he would live, the fish should not leave the water. Man should not enter the bowels of the earth."

"But," asked a young man in the crowd, "how if Gill Stadt had to work in the mines to win his sweetheart?"

"A man should never risk his life," interrupted Olly, "for affections which are far from being worth a life, or filling it. A pretty wedding-bed Gill earned for his Guth!"

"So then that young woman," inquired a curious bystander, "drowned herself in despair at the death of this young man?"

¹ A small coin worth twelve and a half cents. The name is still in use in Louisiana.

"Who says so?" loudly exclaimed a soldier, pushing his way through the crowd. "That young girl, whom I knew well, was indeed engaged to marry a young miner who was lately crushed by falling rocks in the underground tunnels of Storwaadsgrube, near Roeraas; but she was also the sweetheart of one of my mates, and as she was going to Munkholm secretly, day before yesterday, to celebrate with her lover the death of her betrothed, her boat capized on a reef, and she was drowned."

A confused sound of voices arose: "Impossible, master soldier," cried the old women. The young ones were silent; and Neighbor Niels maliciously reminded fisher Braal of his serious statement: "That's what comes of falling in love!"

The soldier was about to lose his temper with his opponents; he had already called them "old witches from the cave of Quiragoth," and they were not disposed to bear so grave an insult patiently, when a sharp and imperious voice, crying "Silence, silence, you old fools!" put an end to the dispute. All was still, as when the sudden crow of a cock is heard amid the cackling of the hens.

Before relating the rest of the scene, it may be well to describe the spot where it occurred. It was — as the reader has doubtless guessed — one of those gloomy structures which public pity and social forethought devote to unknown corpses, the last asylum of the dead, whose lives were usually sad ones; where the careless spectator, the surly or kindly observer gather, and friends often meet tearful relatives, whom long and unendurable anxiety has robbed of all but one sad hope. At the period now

remote, and in the uncivilized region to which I have carried my reader, there had as yet been no attempt, as in our cities of gold and mud, to make these resting-places into ingeniously forbidding or elegantly funereal edifices. Daylight did not fall through tomb-shaped openings, into artistically sculptured vaults, upon beds which seem as if the guardian of the place were anxious to leave the dead some of the conveniences of life, and the pillow seems arranged for sleep. If the keeper's door were left ajar, the eye, wearied with gazing upon hideous, naked corpses, had not as now the pleasure of resting upon elegant furniture and happy children. Death was there in all its deformity, in all its horror; and there was no attempt to deck its fleshless skeleton with ribbons and gewgaws.

The room in which our actors stood was spacious and dark, which made it seem still larger; it was lighted only by a broad, low door opening upon the port of Thronthjem, and a rough hole in the ceiling, through which a dull, white light fell, mingled with rain, hail, or snow, according to the weather, upon the corpses lying directly under it. The room was divided by an iron railing, breast-high, running across it from side to side. The public entered the outer portion through the low door; in the inner part were six long black granite slabs, arranged abreast and parallel to each other. A small side door served to admit the keeper and his assistant to either section, their rooms occupying the rear of the building, close to the water. The miner and his betrothed occupied two granite beds; decomposition had already begun its work upon the young woman's body, showing itself in large blue and purple spots running along

her limbs on the line of the blood-vessels. Gill's features were stern and set; but his body was so horribly mutilated that it was impossible to judge whether his beauty were really so great as old Olly declared.

It was before these disfigured remains, in the midst of the mute crowd, that the conversation which we have faithfully interpreted, began.

A tall, withered old man, sitting with folded arms and bent head upon a broken stool in the darkest corner of the room, had apparently paid no heed until the moment when he rose suddenly, exclaiming, "Silence, silence, you old fools!" and seized the soldier by the arm.

All were hushed; the soldier turned and broke into a burst of laughter at the sight of his strange interrupter, whose pale face, thin greasy locks, long fingers, and complete costume of reindeer leather amply justified this mirthful reception. But a clamor arose from the crowd of women, for a moment confounded: "It is the keeper of the Spladgest!¹ — That infernal doorkeeper to the dead! — That diabolical Spiagudry! — That accursed sorcerer!"

"Silence, you old fools, silence! If this be the witches' Sabbath, hasten away and find your broomsticks; if you don't, they'll fly off without you. Let this worthy descendant of the god Thor alone."

Then Spiagudry, striving to assume a gracious expression, addressed the soldier: "You say, my good fellow, that this wretched woman —"

"Old rascal!" muttered Olly; "yes, we are all 'wretched women,' to him, because our bodies, if they fall into his

¹ Name of the Throndhjem morgue.

claws, only bring him thirty escalins' reward, while he gets forty for the paltry carcass of a man."

"Silence, old women!" repeated Spiagudry. "In truth, these daughters of the Devil are like their kettles; when they wax warm, they must needs sing. Tell me, my valiant king of the sword, your comrade, this Guth's lover, will doubtless kill himself in despair at her loss, won't he?"

Here burst forth the long-repressed storm. "Do you hear the miscreant, — the old Pagan!" cried twenty shrill, discordant voices. "He would fain see one less man living, for the sake of the forty escalins that a dead body brings him."

"And what if I would?" replied the keeper of the Spladgest. "Does n't our gracious king and master, Christian V., — may Saint Hospitius bless him! — declare himself the natural guardian of all miners, so that when they die he may enrich his royal treasury with their paltry leavings?"

"You honor the king," answered fisher Braal, "by comparing the royal treasury to the strong-box of your charnel-house, and him to yourself, Neighbor Spiagudry."

"Neighbor, indeed!" said the keeper, shocked by such familiarity. "Your neighbor! say rather your host! since it may easily chance some day, my dear boat-dweller, that I shall have to lend you one of my six stone beds for a week. Besides," he added, with a laugh, "if I spoke of that soldier's death, it was merely from a desire to see the perpetuation of the custom of suicide for the sake of those great and tragic passions which ladies are wont to inspire."

"Well, you tall corpse and keeper of corpses," said the soldier, "what are you after, with your amiable grimace, which looks so much like the last smile of a man who has been hanged?"

"Capital, my valiant fellow!" replied Spiagudry. "I always felt that there was more wit beneath the helmet of Constable Thurn, who conquered the Devil with his sword and his tongue, than under the mitre of Bishop Isleif, who wrote the history of Iceland, or the square cap of Professor Shoenning, who described our cathedral."

"In that case, if you will take my advice, my old bag of leather, you will give up the revenues of the charnel-house, and go and sell yourself to the viceroy's museum of curiosities at Bergen. I swear to you, by Belphegor, that they pay their weight in gold there for rare beasts; but say, what do you want with me?"

"When the bodies brought here are found in the water, we have to give half the reward to the fisherman. I was going to ask you, therefore, illustrious heir to Constable Thurn, if you would persuade your unfortunate comrade not to drown himself, but to choose some other mode of death; it can't matter much to him, and he would not wish to wrong the unhappy Christian who must entertain his corpse, if the loss of Guth should really drive him to that act of despair."

"You are quite mistaken, my charitable and hospitable friend. My comrade will not have the pleasure of occupying an apartment in your tempting tavern with its six beds. Don't you suppose he has already consoled himself

with another Valkyria for the death of that girl? He had long been tired of your Guth, by my beard!"

At these words, the storm, which Spiagudry had for a moment drawn upon his own head, again burst more furiously than ever upon the luckless soldier.

"What, miserable scamp!" shrieked the old women; "is that the way you forget us? And yet we love such good-for-nothings!"

The young girls still kept silence. Some of them even thought — greatly against their will, of course — that this graceless fellow was very good-looking.

"Oh, ho!" said the soldier; "has the witches' Sabbath come round again? Beelzebub's punishment is frightful indeed if he be condemned to hear such choruses once a week!"

No one can say how this fresh squall would have ended, if general attention had not at this moment been utterly absorbed by a noise from without. The uproar increased steadily, and presently a swarm of little ragged boys entered the Spladgest, tumultuously shouting and crowding about a covered bier carried by two men.

"Where does that come from?" the keeper asked the bearers.

"From Urchtal Sands."

"Oglypiglap!" shouted Spiagudry.

One of the side doors opened, a little man of Lappish race, dressed in leather, entered, and signed to the bearers to follow him. Spiagudry accompanied them, and the door closed before the curious crowd had time to guess, by the

length of the body on the bier, whether it were a man or a woman.

This subject still occupied all their thoughts, when Spiagudry and his assistant reappeared in the second compartment, carrying the corpse of a man, which they placed upon one of the granite couches.

"It's a long time since I've handled such handsome clothes," said Oglypiglap; then, shaking his head and standing on tiptoe, he hung above the dead man the elegant uniform of a captain in the army. The corpse's head was disfigured, and his limbs were covered with blood; the keeper sprinkled the body several times from an old broken pail.

"By Saint Beelzebub!" cried the soldier, "it is an officer of my regiment. Let me see; can it be Captain Bol-lar, — from grief at his uncle's death? Bah! he is the heir. Baron Randner? He lost his estate at cards yesterday, but he will win it back to-morrow, with his adversary's castle. Can it be Captain Lory, whose dog was drowned, or Paymaster Stunck, whose wife was unfaithful to him? But, really, I don't see why he should blow out his brains for that!"

The crowd steadily increased. Just at this instant, a young man who was crossing the wharf, seeing the mob of people, dismounted from his horse, handed the bridle to the servant behind him, and entered the Spladgest. He wore a simple travelling dress, was armed with a sword, and wrapped in a large green cloak; a black plume, fastened to his hat by a diamond buckle, fell over his noble face and waved to and fro upon his lofty brow, shaded by

chestnut hair; his boots and spurs, soiled with mud, showed that he had come a long distance.

As he entered, a short, thick-set man, also wrapped in a cloak and hiding his hands in huge gloves, replied to the soldier.

"And who told you that he killed himself? That man no more committed suicide, I'll be bound, than the roof of your cathedral set itself on fire."

As the double-edged sword makes two wounds, this phrase gave birth to two answers.

"Our cathedral!" said Niels; "it is covered with copper now. It was that miserable Hans who set it on fire to make work for the miners, one of whom was his favorite Gill Stadt, whom you see lying yonder."

"What the devil!" cried the soldier, in his turn; "do you dare tell me, the second musketeer in the Munkholm garrison, that that man did not blow out his brains!"

"He was murdered," coldly replied the little fellow.

"Just listen to the oracle! Go along with you. Your little gray eyes can see no better than your hands do under the big gloves with which you cover them in the middle of the summer."

The little man's eyes flashed.

"Soldier, pray to your patron saint that these hands may never leave their mark upon your face!"

"Oh!—enough of this!" cried the soldier, in a rage. Then, pausing suddenly, he said: "No, there must be no word of a duel before dead men."

The little man growled a few words in a foreign tongue, and vanished.

A voice cried out: "He was found on Urchtal Sands."

"On Urchtal Sands?" said the soldier; "Captain Dispolsen was to land there this morning, from Copenhagen."

"Captain Dispolsen has not yet reached Munkholm," said another voice.

"They say that Hans of Iceland haunts those sands just now," added a fourth.

"Then it is possible that this may be the captain," said the soldier, "if Hans was the murderer; for we all know that the Icелander murders in so devilish a fashion that his victims often seem to be suicides."

"What sort of man is this Hans?" asked some one.

"He is a giant," said one.

"He is a dwarf," said another.

"Has nobody seen him, then?" put in a voice.

"Those who see him for the first time, see him for the last time also."

"Hush!" said old Olly; "they say there are but three persons who ever exchanged human speech with him, — that reprobate of a Spiagudry, Widow Stadt, and — but he had a sad life and a sad death — that poor Gill, who lies yonder. Hush!"

"Hush!" was repeated on all sides.

"Now," suddenly exclaimed the soldier, "I am sure that this is indeed Captain Dispolsen. I recognize the steel chain which our prisoner, old Schumacker, gave him when he went away."

The young man with the black plume broke the silence abruptly: "Are you sure it is Captain Dispolsen?"

"Sure, by the merits of Saint Beelzebub!" said the soldier.

The young man left the room hurriedly.

"Get me a boat for Munkholm," he said to his servant.

"But, the general, sir!"

"Take the horses to him. I will follow to-morrow. Am I my own master, or not? Come, night is falling, and I am in haste. A boat!"

The servant obeyed, and for some time stood watching his young master as he moved away from the shore.



II.

I will sit by you while you tell me some pleasant tale to pass away the time. — MATURIN: *Bertram*.

THE reader is already aware that we are at Throndhjem, one of the four chief cities in Norway, although not the residence of the viceroy. At the date of this story (1699) the kingdom of Norway was still united to Denmark, and governed by a viceroy whose seat was in Bergen, a larger, handsomer, and more southerly town than Throndhjem, in spite of the disagreeable nickname attached to it by the famous Admiral Tromp.

Throndhjem offers a pleasant prospect as you approach it by the fjord to which the city gives its name. The harbor is quite large, although it cannot be entered easily in all weathers. At this time it resembled nothing so much as a long canal, lined on the right by Danish and Norwegian

ships, and on the left by foreign vessels, as prescribed by law. In the background lay the town, situated on a well-cultivated plain, and crowned by the lofty spires of the cathedral. This church — one of the finest pieces of Gothic architecture, as we may judge from Professor Shoenning's book, so learnedly quoted by Spiagudry, which describes it as it was before repeated fires had laid it waste — bore upon its highest pinnacle the episcopal cross, the distinctive sign that it was the cathedral of the Lutheran bishop of Thronthjem. Beyond the town, in the blue distance, were the slender white peaks of the Kiölen Mountains, like the sharp-pointed ornaments on an antique crown.

In the middle of the harbor, within cannon-shot of the shore, upon a mass of rocks lashed by the waves, rose the lonely fortress of Munkholm, a gloomy prison which then held a prisoner celebrated for the splendor of his long prosperity and for his sudden disgrace.

Schumacker, born in an obscure station, was loaded with favors by his master, then hurled from the chair of the Lord High Chancellor of Denmark and Norway to the traitor's bench, dragged to the scaffold, and thence by royal clemency cast into a lonely dungeon at the extreme end of the two kingdoms. His creatures had overthrown him, but gave him no right to inveigh against their ingratitude. How could he complain if the steps gave way beneath him, which he had built so high for his own aggrandizement only?

The founder of the Danish nobility, from the depth of his exile, saw the grandees whom he had created share

his own dignities between them. Count d'Ahlefeld, his mortal enemy, succeeded him as chancellor; General Arensdorf, as earl-marshal, distributed military titles, and Bishop Spollyson took the position of inspector of universities. The only one of his foes who did not owe his rise to him was Count Ulric Frederic Guldenlew, natural son of King Frederic III., and now viceroy of Norway. He was the most generous of all.

Toward the sombre rock of Munkholm the boat of the youth with the black plume now slowly moved. The sun sank rapidly behind the lonely fortress, whose walls cut off its last beams, already so horizontal that the peasant on the distant eastern hills of Larsynn might see beside him on the heather the faint shadow of the sentinel keeping his watch on Munkholm's highest tower.

III.

Ah! my heart could receive no more painful wound! . . . A young man destitute of morals. . . . He dared gaze at her! His glance soiled her purity. Claudia! The mere thought drives me mad. — LESSING.

“ANDREW, go and order them to ring the curfew bell in half an hour. Let Sorsyll relieve Duckness at the portcullis, and Malvidius keep watch on the platform of the great tower. Let a careful lookout be kept in the direction of the Lion of Schleswig donjon. Do not forget to fire the cannon at seven o'clock, as a signal to lift the harbor chain. But no, we must wait a little for Captain Dispolsen; better light the signals instead, and see if the Walderhog beacon is lighted, as I ordered to-day. Be sure to keep refreshments ready for the captain. And, I forgot, — give Toric-Belfast, the second musketeer of the regiment, two days' arrest; he has been absent all day.”

So said the sergeant-at-arms beneath the black and smoky roof of the Munkholm guard-house, in the low tower over the outer castle gate.

The soldiers addressed left their cards or bed to carry out his orders; then silence was restored. At this moment the measured beat of oars was heard outside.

“That must be Captain Dispolsen at last!” said the sergeant, opening the tiny grated window which looked out upon the gulf.

A boat was just landing at the foot of the iron gate.

"Who goes there?" cried the sergeant in hoarse tones.

"Open!" was the answer; "peace and safety."

"There is no admittance here. Have you a passport?"

"Yes."

"I must make sure of that. If you lie, by the merits of my patron saint, you shall taste the waters of the gulf!" Then, closing the lattice and turning away, he added: "It is not the captain yet."

A light shone behind the iron gate. The rusty bolts creaked, the grating rose, the gate opened, and the sergeant examined a parchment handed him by the new-comer.

"Pass in," said he. "But stay," he added hastily, "leave your hat-buckle outside. No one is allowed to enter the prisons of the State wearing jewels. The order declares that 'the king and the members of the royal family, the viceroy and members of the vice-regal family, the bishop, and the officers of the garrison, are alone excepted.' You come under none of these heads, do you?"

The young man, without reply, removed the forbidden ornament, and flung it to the fisherman who brought him thither, in payment of his services; the latter, fearing lest he might repent his generosity, made haste to put a broad expanse of sea between the benefactor and his benefit.

While the sergeant, grumbling at the chancellor's imprudence in being so prodigal with his passes, replaced the clumsy bars, and while the lingering sound of his heavy boots still echoed on the stairs leading to the guard-house,

the young man, throwing his mantle over his shoulder, hurriedly crossed the dark vault of the low tower, the long parade-ground, and the ordnance-room, where lay a few old dismantled culverins, still to be seen in the Copenhagen museum, all nearer approach to which was forbidden by the warning cry of a sentinel. He reached the great portcullis, which was raised on sight of his parchment. Thence, followed by a soldier, he crossed diagonally, without hesitation, and like one familiar with the place, one of the four square courts which skirt the great circular yard, in whose midst rose the huge round rock upon which stood the donjon, called the castle of the Lion of Schleswig, from the forced sojourn there of Jotham the Lion, Duke of Schleswig, held captive by his brother, Rolf the Dwarf.

It is not our purpose to give a description of Munkholm keep, the more so that the reader, confined in a State prison, might fear that he could not escape through the garden. He would be mistaken; for the castle of the Lion of Schleswig, meant for prisoners of distinction only, among other conveniences affords them the pleasure of a walk in a sort of wild garden of considerable extent, where clumps of holly, a few ancient yews, and some dark pines grow among the rocks around the lofty prison, inside an enclosure of thick walls and huge towers.

Reaching the foot of the round rock, the young man climbed the rude winding steps which lead to the foot of one of the towers of the enclosure, having a postern below, which served as the entrance to the keep. Here he blew a loud blast on a copper horn handed to him by the warder of the great portcullis. "Come in, come in!" eagerly ex-



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claimed a voice from within; "it must be that confounded captain!"

As the postern swung open, the new-comer saw, in a dimly lighted Gothic apartment, a young officer stretched carelessly upon a pile of cloaks and reindeer-skins, beside one of the three-beaked lamps which our ancestors used to hang from the rose-work of their ceilings, and which at this moment stood upon the ground. The elegance and indeed excessive luxury of his dress was in strong contrast with the bare walls and rude furniture; he held a book, and turned slightly toward the new-comer.

"Is it you, Captain? How are you, Captain? You little suspected that you were keeping a man waiting who has not the pleasure of your acquaintance; but our acquaintance will soon be made, will it not? Begin by receiving my commiseration upon your return to this venerable castle. Short as my stay here may be, I shall soon be about as gay as the owl nailed at donjon doors to serve as scarecrow, and when I return to Copenhagen, to my sister's wedding feast, the deuce take me if four women out of a hundred will know me! Tell me, are the knots of pink ribbon at the hem of my doublet still in fashion? Has any one translated a new novel by that Frenchwoman, *Mademoiselle Scudéry*? I have '*Clelia*;' I suppose people are still reading it in Copenhagen. It is my code of gallantry, now that I am forced to sigh remote from so many bright eyes; for, bright as they are, the eyes of our young prisoner — you know who I mean — have never a message for me. Ah! were it not for my father's orders! . . . I must tell you in confidence, Captain, that my father, — but don't

mention it.—charged me to—you understand me—Schumacker's daughter. But I have my labor for my pains; that pretty statue is not a woman; she weeps all day long and never looks at me."

The young man, unable thus far to interrupt the officer's extreme volubility, uttered an exclamation of surprise:—

"What! What did you say? Charged you to seduce the daughter of that unfortunate Schumacker!"

"Seduce? Well, so be it, if that is the name you give it now in Copenhagen; but I defy the Devil himself to succeed. Day before yesterday, being on duty, I put on for her express benefit a superb French ruff sent direct from Paris. Would you believe that she never even raised her eyes to look at me, although I passed through her room three or four times clinking my new spurs, whose rowels are no bigger than a Lombardy ducat? That's the newest fashion, is n't it?"

"Heavens! Heavens!" said the young man, striking his forehead; "but this confounds me!"

"I thought it would!" rejoined the officer, mistaking the meaning of the remark. "Not to take the least notice of me! It is incredible, and yet it is true."

The young man strode up and down the room in violent excitement.

"Won't you take some refreshment, Captain Dispolsen?" cried the officer.

The young man started.

"I am not Captain Dispolsen."

"What!" said the officer angrily, sitting up as he spoke;

"and pray who are you, then, that venture to introduce yourself here at this hour?"

The young man displayed his papers.

"I wish to see Count Griffenfeld, — I would say, your prisoner."

"The Count! the Count!" muttered the officer in some displeasure. "But, to be sure, this paper is in order; here is the signature of Vice-Chancellor Grummond de Knud: 'Admit the bearer to visit all the royal prisons at any hour and at any time.' Grummond de Knud is brother to old General Levin de Knud, who is in command at Throndhjem, and you must know that this old general had the bringing up of my future brother-in-law."

"Thanks for these family details, Lieutenant. Don't you think you have told me enough of them?"

"The impertinent fellow is right," said the lieutenant, biting his lips. "Hullo, there, officer, officer of the tower! Escort this stranger to Schumacker, and do not scold if I have taken down your lamp with three beaks and but one wick. I was curious to examine an article which is doubtless the work of Sciold the Pagan or Havar the giant-killer; and besides it is no longer the fashion to hang anything but crystal chandeliers from the ceiling."

With these words, as the young man and his escort crossed the deserted donjon garden, the martyr to fashion resumed the thread of the love adventures of the Amazonian Clelia and Horatius the One-eyed.

IV.

Benvolio. Where the devil should this Romeo be? Came he not home to-night?

Mercutio. Not to his father's; I spoke with his man.

SHAKESPEARE : *Romeo and Juliet*.

A MAN and two horses entered the courtyard of the palace of the governor of Throndhjem. The horseman dismounted, shaking his head with a discontented air. He was about to lead the two animals to the stable, when his arm was seized, and a voice cried: "How! You here alone, Poël! And your master,—where is your master?"

It was old General Levin de Knud, who, seeing from his window the young man's servant and the empty saddle, descended quickly, and fastened upon the groom a gaze which betrayed even more alarm than his question.

"Your Excellency," said Poël, with a low bow, "my master has left Throndhjem."

"What! has he been here, and gone again without seeing his general, without greeting his old friend! And how long since?"

"He arrived this evening and left this evening."

"This evening,—this very evening! But where did he stay? Where has he gone?"

"He stopped at the Spladgest, and has embarked for Munkholm."

"Ah! I supposed he was at the antipodes. But what is his business at that castle? What took him to the Spladgest? Just like my knight-errant. After all, I am rather to blame, for why did I give him such a bringing up? I wanted him to be free in spite of his rank."

"Therefore he is no slave to etiquette," said Poël.

"No; but he is to his own caprice. Well, he will doubtless return. Rest and refresh yourself, Poël. Tell me," and the general's face took on an expression of solicitude, "tell me, Poël, have you been doing much running up and down?"

"General, we came here direct from Bergen. My master was melancholy."

"Melancholy! Why, what can have occurred between him and his father? Is he averse to this marriage?"

"I do not know. But they say that his Serene Highness insists upon it."

"Insists! You say, Poël, that the viceroy insists upon this match! But why should he insist unless Ordener refused?"

"I don't know, your Excellency. He seems sad."

"Sad! Do you know how his father received him?"

"The first time, it was at the camp, near Bergen. His Serene Highness said, 'I seldom see you, my son.' 'So much the better for me, my lord and father,' replied my master, 'if you take note of it.' Then he gave his Grace certain details about his travels in the North, and his Grace said: 'It is well.' Next day my master came back from the palace and said: 'They want me to marry; but I must consult my second

father, General Levin.' I saddled the horses, and here we are."

"Really, my good Poël," said the general, in trembling tones, "did he really call me his second father?"

"Yes, your Excellency."

"Woe to me if this marriage distresses him, for I will sooner incur the king's displeasure than lend myself to it. And yet, the daughter of the Lord High Chancellor of both kingdoms — By the way, Poël, does Ordener know that his future mother-in-law, Countess d'Ahlefeld, has been here incognito since yesterday, and that the count is expected?"

"I don't know, General."

"Oh, yes," thought the old governor, "he knows it; for why else should he beat a retreat the instant that he arrived?"

Upon this, the general, with a friendly wave of the hand to Poël, and a salute to the sentinel who presented arms to him, returned in anxious mood to the quarters which he had left in anxious mood.



V.

It seemed as if every emotion had stirred his heart, and had also deserted it ; nothing remained but the mournful, piercing gaze of a man thoroughly familiar with men, who saw, at a glance, the aim and object of all things. — SCHILLER : *The Visions*.

WHEN, after leading the stranger along the winding stairs and lofty halls of the donjon of the Lion of Schleswig, the officer finally threw open the door of the room occupied by the man he sought, the first words that fell upon his ear were once more these : “Has Captain Dispolsen come at last ?”

The speaker was an old man, seated with his back to the door, his elbows on a writing-table, his head buried in his hands. He wore a black woollen gown, and above a bed at one end of the room hung a broken escutcheon, around which were grouped the broken collars of the orders of the Elephant and the Dannebrog ; a count’s coronet, re-

versed, was fastened under the shield, and two fragments of a hand of Justice, tied crosswise, completed the strange ornamentation. The old man was Schumacker.

"No, my Lord," replied the officer; then he said to the stranger, "This is the prisoner;" and leaving them together, he closed the door, without heeding the shrill voice of the old man, who exclaimed: "If it is not the captain, I will see no one."

At these words the stranger remained by the door; and the prisoner, thinking himself alone, — for he had turned away, — fell back into his silent revery. Suddenly he exclaimed: "The captain has assuredly forsaken and betrayed me! Men, — men are like the icicle which an Arab took for a diamond; he hid it carefully in his wallet, and when he looked for it again he found not even a drop of water."

"I am no such man," said the stranger.

Schumacker rose quickly. "Who is here? Who overhears me? Is it some miserable tool of that Guldenlew?"

"Speak no evil of the viceroy, my lord Count."

"Lord Count! Do you address me thus to flatter me? You have your labor for your pains; I am powerful no longer."

"He who speaks to you never knew you in your day of power, and is none the less your friend."

"Because he still hopes to gain something from me; those memories of the unhappy which linger in the minds of men are to be measured by the hopes of future gain."

"I am the one who should complain, noble Count; for

"I remember you, and you have forgotten me. I am Ordener."

A flash of joy lit up the old man's sad eyes, and a smile which he could not repress parted his white beard, as when a sunbeam breaks through a cloud.

"Ordener! Welcome, traveller Ordener! A thousand prayers for the happiness of the traveller who remembers the prisoner!"

"But," inquired Ordener, "had you really forgotten me?"

"I had forgotten you," said Schumacker, resuming his sombre mood, "as we forget the breeze which refreshes us and passes by: we are fortunate if it does not become a whirlwind to destroy us."

"Count Griffenfeld," rejoined the young man, "did you not count upon my return?"

"Old Schumacker did not count upon it: but there is a maiden here, who reminded me this very day that it was a year on the 8th of last May, since you went away."

Ordener started.

"Heavens! Can it be your Ethel, noble Count?"

"Who else?"

"Your daughter, my Lord, has deigned to count the months of my absence! Oh, how many dreary days I have passed! I have traversed Norway from Christiania to Wardhus; but my journeyings always tended back toward Thronhjelm."

"Use your freedom, young man, while you may. But tell me who you are. I would like, Ordener, to know you by some other name. The son of one of my mortal foes is called Ordener."

"Perhaps, my lord Count, this mortal foe feels greater kindness for you than you for him."

"You evade my question; but keep your secret. I might learn that the fruit which quenches my thirst is a poison which will destroy me."

"Count!" cried Ordener, angrily; "Count!" he repeated, in tones of pity and reproach.

"Why should I trust you," replied Schumacker,—"you who to my very face defend the merciless Guldenlew?"

"The viceroy," gravely interrupted the young man, "has just ordered that for the future you shall be free and unguarded within the entire precinct of the Lion of Schleswig keep. This news I learned at Bergen, and you will doubtless soon hear it from headquarters."

"This is a favor for which I dared not hope, and I thought you were the only person to whom I had mentioned my wish. So they lessen the weight of my chains as that of my years increases; and when old age renders me helpless, they will probably tell me, 'You are free.'"

So saying, the old man smiled bitterly, and added: "And you, young man, do you still cling to your foolish ideas of independence?"

"If I had not those same foolish ideas, I should not be here."

"How did you come to Trondhjem?"

"Why, on horseback."

"How did you reach Munkholm?"

"By boat."

"Poor fool! You think yourself free, and yet you only leave a horse for a boat. It is not your own limbs that

carry out your wishes ; it is a brute beast, it is material matter ; and you call that free will ! ”

“ I force animate beings to obey me. ”

“ To assume a right to the obedience of certain beings is to give others a right to command you. Independence exists only in isolation. ”

“ You do not love mankind, noble Count ? ”

The old man laughed sadly. “ I weep that I am a man, and I laugh at him who would console me. You will yet learn, if you do not already know, that misfortune creates suspicion as prosperity does ingratitude. Tell me, since you come from Bergen, what favoring winds blow upon Captain Dispolsen. Some good fortune must have befallen him, that he forgets me. ”

Ordener looked grave and embarrassed.

“ Dispolsen, my lord Count ? I come here to-day to talk to you of him. I know that he possessed your entire confidence. ”

“ You know ? ” broke in the prisoner, uneasily. “ You are mistaken. No one on earth has my confidence. Dispolsen has, it is true, my papers, and very important papers too. He went to Copenhagen, to the king, for me. I may even confess that I reckoned more surely upon him than upon any one else, for in the days of my prosperity I never did him a service. ”

“ Well, noble Count, I saw him to-day — ”

“ Your distress tells me the rest ; he is a traitor. ”

“ He is dead. ”

“ Dead ! ”

The prisoner folded his arms and bent his head, then

looking up at the young man, said: "I told you some good fortune must have befallen him!"

His eye turned to the wall, where the signs of his former grandeur hung, and he waved his hand, as if to dismiss the witness of a grief which he strove to conquer.

"I do not pity him; 't is but one man the less. Nor do I pity myself; what have I to lose? But my daughter, — my unfortunate daughter! I shall be the victim of this infernal plot; and what is to become of her, if her father is taken from her?"

He turned quickly to Ordener. "How did he die? Where did you see him?"

"I saw him at the Spladgest. No one knows whether he died by suicide or by the hand of an assassin."

"That is now all-important. If he was murdered, I know who dealt the blow. Then all is lost. He bore proofs of the conspiracy against me. Those proofs might have saved me and ruined them! Unhappy Ethel!"

"My lord Count," said Ordener, bowing, "to-morrow I will tell you whether he was murdered."

Schumacker, without answering, cast on Ordener, as he left the room, a look of quiet despair more terrible than the calm of death.

Ordener found himself in the prisoner's empty ante-chamber, not knowing which way to turn. Night was far advanced and the room was dark. He opened a door at haphazard and entered a vast corridor lighted only by the moon, which moved rapidly through pale clouds. Its misty beams fell now and again upon the long, narrow glass windows, and painted on the opposite wall what

seemed a procession of ghosts, appearing and disappearing simultaneously in the depths of the passage. The young man slowly crossed himself, and walked toward a light which shone faintly at the end of the corridor.

A door stood ajar; a young girl knelt in a Gothic oratory, at the foot of a bare altar, reciting in low tones litanies to the Virgin, — simple and sublime aspirations, in which the soul that rises toward the Mother of Seven Sorrows asks nothing but her prayers.

The young girl was dressed in black crape and white gauze, as if to show at a glance that her days had hitherto been passed in grief and innocence. Even in this modest attitude she bore the impress of a strange nature. Her eyes and her long hair were black (a very rare beauty in the North); her eyes, raised to heaven, seemed kindled with rapture rather than dimmed by meditation. She seemed a virgin from the shores of Cyprus or the banks of the Tiber, clad in the fanciful disguise of one of Ossian's characters and prostrate before the wooden cross and stone altar of Christ Jesus.

Ordener started and almost fell, for he recognized the devotee.

She was praying for her father, for the mighty who had fallen, for the old and desolate prisoner; and she recited aloud the psalm of the deliverance out of Egypt. She prayed for another as well, but Ordener did not hear his name. He did not hear it, for she did not utter it; she merely recited the canticle of the Sulamite, the bride who awaits her bridegroom and the return of her beloved.

Ordener stepped back into the gallery; he respected

the maiden holding converse with the sky. Prayer is a great mystery, and his heart was involuntarily filled with unknown but profane ecstasy.

The door of the oratory was gently closed. Soon a light borne by a white figure moved toward him through the darkness. He stood still, for he felt one of the strongest emotions of his life; he leaned against the gloomy wall; his body was weak, and his limbs trembled beneath him. In the silence of his entire being the beating of his heart was plainly audible to his own ear.

As the young girl passed, she heard the rustle of a garment, and a quick, sudden gasp, and cried out in terror.

Ordener rushed forward. With one arm he supported her, with the other he vainly tried to grasp the lamp which she had dropped, and which went out.

"It is I," he said softly.

"It is Ordener!" said the girl; for the last echo of that voice, which she had not heard for a year, still rang in her ear.

And the moon, passing by, revealed the joy of her fair face. Then she repeated, in timid confusion, freeing herself from the young man's arms, "It is my lord Ordener."

"Himself, Countess Ethel."

"Why do you call me countess?"

"Why do you call me my lord?"

The young girl smiled, and was silent. The young man was silent, and sighed. She was first to break the silence.

"How came you here?"

"Pardon me, if my presence disturbs you. I came to see the count, your father."

"Then," said Ethel, in a changed tone, "you only came for my father's sake."

The young man bent his head, for these words seemed to him unjust.

"I suppose you have been in Throndhjem a long time," she continued reproachfully, "I suppose you have been here a long time already? Your absence from this castle cannot have seemed long to you."

Ordener, deeply wounded, made no reply.

"You are right," said the prisoner, in a voice which trembled with anger and distress; "but," she added, in a haughty tone, "I hope, my lord Ordener, that you did not overhear my prayers?"

"Countess," reluctantly replied the young man, "I did hear you."

"Ah! my lord Ordener, it was far from courteous to listen."

"I did not listen, noble Countess," said Ordener in a low voice; "I overheard you accidentally."

"I prayed for my father," rejoined the girl, looking steadily at him, as if expecting an answer to this very simple statement.

Ordener was silent.

"I also prayed," she continued uneasily, and apparently anxious as to the effect which her words might produce upon him, "I also prayed for some one who bears your name, for the son of the viceroy, Count Guldenlew. For we should pray for every one, even our persecutors."

And she blushed, for she thought she was lying; but she was offended with the young man, and she fancied that

she had mentioned him in her prayer; she had only named him in her heart.

"Ordener Guldenlew is very unfortunate, noble lady, if you reckon him among the number of your persecutors; and yet he is very fortunate to possess a place in your prayers."

"Oh, no," said Ethel, troubled and alarmed by his cold manner, "no, I did not pray for him. I do not know what I did, nor what I do. As for the viceroy's son, I detest him; I do not know him. Do not look at me so sternly; have I offended you? Can you not forgive a poor prisoner,—you who spend your days in the society of some fair and noble lady, free and happy like yourself?"

"I, Countess!" exclaimed Ordener.

Ethel burst into tears; the young man flung himself at her feet.

"Did you not tell me," she continued, smiling through her tears, "that your absence seemed to you short?"

"Who, I, Countess?"

"Do not call me countess," said she, gently; "I am no longer a countess to any one, and far less to you."

The young man sprang up, and could not help clasping her to his heart in convulsive delight.

"Oh, my adored Ethel, call me your own Ordener! Tell me,"—and his ardent glances rested on her eyes wet with tears,— "tell me, do you love me still?"

The young girl's answer went unheard, for Ordener, carried away by his emotions, snatched from her lips with her reply that first favor, that sacred kiss, which in the sight of God suffices to make two lovers man and wife.

Both were speechless, because the moment was one of those solemn ones, so rare and so brief in this world, when the soul seems to feel something of celestial bliss. These instants when two souls thus converse in a language understood by no other are not to be described; then all that is human is hushed, and the two immaterial beings become mysteriously united for life in this world and eternity in the next.

Ethel slowly withdrew from Ordener's arms, and by the light of the moon each gazed into the other's face with ecstasy; only, the young man's eye of fire flashed with masculine pride and leonine courage, while the maiden's downcast face was marked by that modesty and angelic shame which in a virgin beauty are always blended with all the joys of love.

"Were you trying to avoid me just now," she said at last, "here in this corridor, my Ordener?"

"Not to avoid you. I was like the unfortunate blind man who is restored to sight after the lapse of long years, and who turns away from the light's first radiance."

"Your comparison is more applicable to me, for during your absence my only pleasure has been the presence of a wretched man, my father. I spent my weary days in trying to comfort him, and," she added, looking down, "in hoping for your coming. I read the fables of the Edda to my father, and when he doubted all men, I read him the Gospel, that at least he might not doubt Heaven; then I talked to him of you, and he was silent, which shows that he loves you. But when I had spent my evenings in vainly watching the arrival of travellers by various roads,

and the ships which anchored in the harbor, he shook his head with a bitter smile, and I wept. This prison, where my whole past life has been spent, grew hateful to me; and yet my father, who until you came was all-sufficient for my wants, was still here; but you were not here, and I longed for that liberty which I had never known."

There was a charm which no tongue can express, in the maiden's eyes, in the simplicity of her love, and the sweet hesitation of her confession. Ordener listened with the dreamy delight of a being who has been removed from the world of reality to enjoy an ideal world.

"And I," said he, "no longer desire that liberty which you do not share!"

"What, Ordener!" quickly exclaimed Ethel, "will you leave us no more?"

These words recalled the young man to all that he had forgotten.

"My Ethel, I must leave you this very night. I will see you again to-morrow, and to-morrow I must leave you again, to remain until I may return never more to leave you."

"Alas!" mournfully broke in the girl, "must you leave me again?"

"I repeat, my beloved Ethel, that I will come back soon to wrest you from this prison or bury myself in it with you."

"A prisoner with him!" she said softly. "Ah! do not deceive me. Must I only hope for such happiness?"

"What oath do you require? What would you have me do?" cried Ordener; "tell me, Ethel, are you not my

wife?" And in a transport of affection he pressed her to his heart.

"I am yours," she whispered.

The two pure and noble hearts throbbed rapturously together, and were but purer and nobler for the embrace.

At this moment a violent burst of laughter was heard close by. A man wrapped in a cloak opened a dark lantern which he had concealed, and the light suddenly revealed Ethel's alarmed, confused face and Ordener's proud but astonished features.

"Courage, my pretty pair! Courage! It strikes me that after so short a walk in the regions of Romance you can scarcely have followed all the windings of the stream of Sentiment, but that you must have taken a short-cut to reach the village of Kisses so quickly."

Our readers have doubtless recognized the lieutenant, who so cordially admired Mademoiselle de Scudéry. Roused from his reading of "Clelia" by the midnight bell, which the two lovers had failed to hear, he started on his nightly rounds. As he passed the end of the eastern corridor, he caught a few words, and saw what seemed two ghosts moving in the gallery by the light of the moon. Being naturally bold and curious, he hid his lantern under his cloak, and advanced on tiptoe to the two phantoms, so disagreeably awakened from their ecstasy by his sudden burst of laughter.

Ethel made a movement to escape from Ordener; then, returning to his side as if instinctively, and to ask his protection, she hid her burning blushes on her lover's breast.

He raised his head with all the dignity of a king.

"Woe," said he, "woe to him who has frightened and distressed you, Ethel!"

"Yes, indeed," said the lieutenant; "woe befall me if I am so unfortunate as to alarm so sensitive a lady!"

"Sir Lieutenant," haughtily exclaimed Ordener, "I command you to be silent!"

"Sir Insolent," replied the officer, "I command you to be silent!"

"Do you hear me?" returned Ordener in tones of thunder. "Buy pardon by your silence."

"*Tibi tua*," responded the lieutenant; "take your own advice, — buy pardon by your silence!"

"Silence!" cried Ordener in a voice which made the windows shake; and seating the trembling girl in one of the old arm-chairs in the corridor, he grasped the officer rudely by the arm.

"Oh, clown!" said the lieutenant, half laughing, half angry; "don't you see that the doublet which you are so mercilessly crushing is made of the finest Abingdon velvet?"

Ordener looked him full in the face.

"Lieutenant, my patience is not so long as my sword."

"I understand you, my fine fellow," said the lieutenant, with a sardonic smile. "You want me to do you the honor to fight with you. But do you know who I am? No, no, if you please! 'Prince with prince; clown with clown,' as the fair Leander has it."

"If he had added, 'Coward with coward,'" Ordener replied, "I should assuredly never have the distinguished honor of measuring weapons with you."

"I would not hesitate, most worthy shepherd, if you did but wear a uniform."

"I have neither lace nor fringes, Lieutenant; but I wear a sword."

The proud youth, flinging back his cloak, set his cap firmly on his head and grasped his sword-hilt, when Ethel, roused by such imminent danger, seized his arm and clasped his neck, with an exclamation of terror and entreaty.

"You are wise, my pretty mistress, if you do not want your young coxcomb punished for his temerity," said the lieutenant, who at Ordener's threats had put himself upon his guard without any show of emotion; "for Cyrus was about to quarrel with Cambyses, — if it be not too great an honor to compare this rustic to Cambyses."

"For Heaven's sake, Lord Ordener," said Ethel, "do not make me the cause and witness of such a misfortune!" Then lifting her lovely eyes to his, she added, "Ordener, I implore you!"

Ordener slowly replaced his half-drawn blade in its scabbard, and the lieutenant exclaimed, —

"By my faith, Sir Knight, — I do not know whether you be a knight, but I give you the title because you seem to deserve it, — let us act according to the laws of valor, if not of gallantry. The lady is right. Engagements like that which I believe you worthy to enter upon with me should not be witnessed by ladies, although — begging this charming damsel's pardon — they may be caused by them. We can therefore only properly discuss the *duellum remotum* here and now, and as the offended party if you will

fix the time, place, and weapons, my fine Toledo blade or my Merida dagger shall be at the service of your chopping-knife from the Ashkreuth forges or your hunting-knife tempered in Lake Sparbo."

The "duel adjourned," which the officer suggested was usual in the North, where scholars aver that the custom of duelling originated.

The most valiant gentlemen offered and accepted a *duellum remotum*. It was sometimes deferred for several months, or even years, and during that space of time the foes must not allude by word or deed to the matter which caused the challenge. Thus in love both rivals forbore to see their sweetheart, so that things might remain unchanged. All confidence was put in the loyalty of a knight upon such a point; as in the ancient tournament, if the judges, deeming the laws of courtesy violated, cast their truncheon into the arena, instantly every combatant stayed his hand; but until the doubt was cleared up, the throat of the conquered man must remain at the selfsame distance from his victor's sword.

"Very well, Chevalier," replied Ordener, after a brief reflection; "a messenger shall inform you of the place."

"Good!" answered the lieutenant; "so much the better. That will give me time to go to my sister's wedding; for you must know that you are to have the honor of fighting with the future brother-in-law of a great lord, the son of the viceroy of Norway, Baron Ordener Guldenlew, who upon the occasion of this 'auspicious union,' as Artamenes has it, will be made Count Daneskiold, a colonel, and a knight of the Order of the Elephant; and I myself, who

am a son of the lord high chancellor of both kingdoms, shall undoubtedly be made a captain."

"Very good, very good, Lieutenant d'Ahlefeld," impatiently exclaimed Ordener, "you are not a captain yet, nor is the son of the viceroy a colonel; and swords are always swords."

"And clowns always clowns, in spite of every effort to lift them to our own level," muttered the soldier.

"Chevalier," added Ordener, "you know the laws of duelling. You are not to enter this donjon again, and you are not to speak of this affair."

"Trust me to be silent; I shall be as dumb as Mutius Scævola when he held his hand on the burning coals. I will not enter the donjon again, nor permit any Argus of the garrison to do so; for I have just received orders to allow Schumacker to go unguarded in future, which order I was directed to convey to him to-night, — as I should have done had I not spent most of the evening in trying on some new boots from Cracow. The order, between you and me, is a very rash one. Would you like to have me show you my boots?"

During this conversation Ethel, seeing that their anger was appeased, and not knowing the meaning of a *duellum remotum*, had disappeared, first softly whispering in Ordener's ear, "To-morrow."

"I wish, Lieutenant d'Ahlefeld, that you would help me out of the fortress."

"Gladly," said the officer, "although it is somewhat late, or rather very early. But how will you find a boat?"

"That is my affair," said Ordener.

Then, chatting pleasantly, they crossed the garden, the circular courtyard, and the square court, Ordener escorted by the officer of the guard, meeting with no obstacle ; they passed through the great gate, the ordnance-room, the parade-ground, and reached the low tower, whose iron doors opened at the lieutenant's order.

"Good-by, Lieutenant d'Ablefeld," said Ordener.

"Good-by," replied the officer. "I declare that you are a brave champion, although I do not know who you are or whether those of your peers whom you may bring to our meeting will be entitled to assume the position of seconds, and ought not rather confine themselves to the modest part of witnesses."

They shook hands, the iron grating was closed, and the lieutenant went back, humming an air by Lully, to enjoy his Polish boots and French novel.

Ordener, left alone upon the threshold, took off his clothes, which he wrapped in his cloak and fastened upon his head with his sword-belt ; then, putting into practice Schumacker's principles of independence, he sprang into the still, cold waters of the fjord, and swam through the darkness towards the shore, in the direction of the Spladgest, — a point which he was almost sure to reach, dead or alive.

The fatigues of the day had exhausted him, so that it was only with great difficulty that he landed. He dressed himself hastily, and walked towards the Spladgest, which reared its black bulk before him, the moon having been for some time completely veiled.

As he approached the building he heard the sound of voices ; a faint light shone from the opening in the roof. Amazed, he knocked loudly at the square door. The noise ceased ; the light disappeared. He knocked again. The light reappeared, and he saw a black figure climb out of the hole in the roof and vanish. Ordener knocked for the third time with the hilt of his sword, and shouted : "Open, in the name of his Majesty the King ! Open, in the name of his Serene Highness the Viceroy !"

The door opened slowly, and Ordener found himself face to face with the pale features and tall, thin figure of Spiagudry, who, his clothes in disorder, his eyes fixed, his hair standing erect, his hands covered with blood, held a lamp, whose flame trembled less visibly than his long and lanky figure.



VI.

Pirro. Never!

Angelo. What! I believe you would try to play the virtuous man.
Wretch! If you utter a single word —

Pirro. But, Angelo, I beseech you, for the love of God —

Angelo. Do not meddle with what you cannot prevent.

Pirro. Ah! When the Devil holds one by a single hair, as well yield
him the entire head. Unhappy that I am!

EMILIA GALOTTI.

AN hour after the young traveller with the black plume left the Spladgest, night fell, and the crowd dispersed. Oglypiglap closed the outer door of the funereal structure, while his master, Spiagudry, gave the bodies deposited within a final sprinkling. Then both withdrew to their scantily furnished abode, and while Oglypiglap slept upon his wretched pallet, like one of the corpses intrusted to his care, the venerable Spiagudry, seated at a stone table covered with old books, dried

plants, and fleshless bones, was buried in grave studies which, although really very harmless, had done no little to give him a reputation among the people, for sorcery and witchcraft, — the disagreeable consequence of science at this period.

He had been absorbed in his meditations for some hours, and, ready at last to exchange his books for his bed, he paused at this mournful passage from Thormodr Torfesen: "When a man lights his lamp, death is beside him ere it be extinguished."

"With the learned doctor's leave," he muttered, "he shall not be beside me to-night."

And he took up his lamp to blow it out.

"Spiagudry!" cried a voice from the room where the corpses lay.

The old man shook from head to foot. Not that he believed, as another might have done in his place, that the gloomy guests of the Spladgest had risen in revolt against their master. He was enough of a scholar to be proof against such imaginary terrors; and his alarm was genuine, because he knew the voice which called him only too well.

"Spiagudry!" angrily repeated the voice, "must I come and pull off your ears before I can make you hear me?"

"Saint Hospitius have mercy, not on my soul, but on my body!" said the terrified old man; and with a step both hastened and delayed by fear, he moved towards the second side door, which he opened. Our readers have not forgotten that this door led into the mortuary.

His lamp lit up a strange and hideous scene, — on the one hand, the thin, tall, stooping figure of Spiagudry; on the other, a short, stout man, dressed from head to foot in the skins of wild beasts, still stained with dried blood, standing at the feet of Gill Stadt's corpse, which, with the dead bodies of the young girl and the captain, occupied the background. These three mute witnesses, buried in shadow, were the only ones who could behold, without flying in horror, the two living beings who now entered into conversation.

The features of the little man, thrown into vivid relief by the light, were singularly wild and fierce. His beard was red and bushy, and his forehead, hidden under an elkskin cap, seemed bristling with hair of the same color; his mouth was large, his lips thick, his teeth white, sharp, and far apart, his nose hooked like an eagle's beak; and his grayish-blue eyes, which were extremely quick, flashed a side glance at Spiagudry, in which the ferocity of a tiger was only tempered by the malice of a monkey. This singular character was armed with a broadsword, an unsheathed dagger, and a stone axe, upon whose long handle he leaned; his hands were covered with thick gloves made of a blue fox-skin.

"That old ghost keeps me waiting a long time," said he, as if talking to himself; and he uttered a sound like the roar of a wild beast.

Spiagudry would certainly have turned pale with fright, had he been capable of turning paler than he was.

"Do you know," continued the little man, addressing him directly, "that I come from Urchtal Sands? Do you

want to change your straw bed for one of these beds of stone, that you keep me waiting thus?"

Spiagudry trembled more than ever; the two solitary teeth left to him chattered in his head.

"Excuse me, master," said he, bending his long back to a level with the little man; "I was asleep."

"Do you want me to make you acquainted with a far sounder sleep than that?"

Spiagudry's face assumed an expression of terror, the only thing which could be more comic than his expression of mirth.

"Well! what is it?" continued the little man. "What ails you? Is my presence disagreeable to you?"

"Oh, my lord and master!" replied the old keeper, "there can surely be no greater happiness for me than to see your Excellence."

And the effort which he made to twist his frightened face into a smile would have unbent the brow of any but the dead.

"Tailless old fox, my Excellence commands you to hand over the clothes of Gill Stadt."

As he uttered this name, the little man's fierce, mocking features grew dark and sad.

"Oh, master, pardon me, but I no longer have them!" said Spiagudry. "Your Grace knows that we are obliged to turn over the property of all workers in the mine to the Crown, the king inheriting by right of their being his wards."

The little man turned to the corpse, folded his arms, and said in a hollow voice: "He is right. These miserable

miners are like the eider duck;¹ their nests are made for them, but their down is plucked from them."

Then raising the corpse in his arms and hugging it to his heart, he began to utter wild yells of love and grief, like the howls of a bear caressing her young. With these inarticulate sounds were blended, at intervals, a few words in a strange lingo, which Spiagudry did not understand.

He let the corpse drop back upon the stone, and turned towards the guardian.

"Do you know, accursed sorcerer, the name of the ill-fated soldier who was so unlucky as to be preferred by that girl to Gill?"

And he kicked the cold remains of Guth Stersen.

Spiagudry shook his head.

"Well! by the axe of Ingulf, the first of my race, I will exterminate every wearer of that uniform!" and he pointed to the officer's dress. "He on whom I must be avenged will surely be of the number. I will burn down the entire forest to consume the poisonous shrub that it contains. I swore it on the day that Gill died, and I have already given him a companion that will delight his corpse. Oh, Gill! so there you lie, lifeless and powerless, — you who outswam the seal, outran the deer; you who outwrestled the bear in the mountains of Kiölen. There you lie motionless, — you who traversed the province of Thronhjøm, from the Orkel to the Lake of Miösen, in a single day; you who climbed the peaks of the Dovrefjeld as the squirrel climbs the oak. There you lie mute and

¹ The Norwegian peasants build nests for the eider duck, surprise them while sitting on their young, and strip them of their down.

dumb, Gill,—you who on the stormy summits of Kongsberg sang louder than the thunder's roar. Oh, Gill! so it is in vain that for your sake I filled up the Färøe mines; in vain for your sake I burned the Throndhjem cathedral. All my labor is in vain, and I shall never see the race of the children of Iceland, the descendants of Ingulf the Destroyer, perpetuated in you; you will never inherit my stone axe; but you leave me the legacy of your skull, from which I may henceforth drink sea-water and the blood of men."

With these words he seized the corpse by the head, exclaiming: "Help me, Spiagudry!" And pulling off his gloves, he displayed his broad hands, armed with long, hard, crooked nails, like the claws of a wild beast.

Spiagudry, seeing him about to hew off the corpse's head with his sword, cried out with unconcealed horror, "Good heavens! master! A dead man!"

"Well," calmly responded the little man, "would you rather have me sharpen my blade upon a living one?"

"Oh, let me entreat your Grace— How can your Excellency commit such profanation? Your Worship— Sir, your Serenity would not —"

"Are you done? Do I require all these titles, living skeleton, to believe in your deep respect for my sabre?"

"By Saint Waldemar! By Saint Usuph! In the name of Saint Hospitius, spare the dead!"

"Help me, and do not talk of saints to the devil!"

"My lord," continued the suppliant Spiagudry, "by your illustrious ancestor, Saint Ingulf —"

"Ingulf the Destroyer was an outlaw like myself."

"In the name of Heaven," said the old man, falling on his knees, "whose anger I would spare you!"

Impatience overcame the little man. His dull gray eyes flashed like a couple of live coals.

"Help me!" he repeated, flourishing his sword.

These words were uttered in the voice which might beseech a lion, could he speak. The keeper, shuddering and half dead with fright, sat down upon the black stone slab, and held Gill's cold, damp head in his hands, while the little man, by means of sword and dagger, removed the crown with rare skill.

When his task was done, he gazed at the bloody skull for some time, muttering strange words; then he handed it over to Spiagudry, to be cleaned and prepared, saying with a sort of howl, —

"And I, when I die, shall not have the comfort of thinking that an heir to the soul of Ingulf will drink seawater and the blood of men from out my skull."

After a mournful pause, he added, —

"The hurricane is followed by a hurricane, each avalanche brings down another avalanche, but I shall be the last of my race. Why did not Gill hate every human face even as I do? What demon foe to the demon of Ingulf urged him into those fatal mines in search of a handful of gold?"

Spiagudry, who now returned with Gill's skull, interrupted him: "Your Excellency is right; even gold, as Snorri Sturleson says, may often be bought at too high a price."

"You remind me," said the little man, "of a commission

I have for you ; here is an iron casket which I found upon yonder officer, all of whose property, as you see, did not fall into your possession ; it is so firmly fastened, that it must contain gold, — the only thing precious in the eyes of men. You will give it to widow Stadt, in Thoctree village, to pay her for her son."

He drew a small iron box from his reindeer-skin knapsack. Spiagudry received it with a low bow.

"Obey my orders faithfully," said the little man, with a piercing glance ; "remember that nothing can prevent two demons from meeting ; I think you are even more of a coward than a miser, and you will answer to me for that box."

"Oh, master, with my soul !"

"Not at all. With your flesh and bones."

At this moment the outer door of the Spladgest echoed with a loud knock. The little man was amazed ; Spiagudry tottered, and shaded his lamp with his hand.

"Who is there ?" growled the little man. "And you, old villain, how you will shake when you hear the last trump sound, if you shiver so now !"

A second and louder knock was heard.

"It is some dead man in haste to enter," said the little man.

"No, master," muttered Spiagudry, "no corpses are brought here after midnight."

"Living or dead, he drives me hence. You, Spiagudry, be faithful and be dumb. I swear to you, by the spirit of Ingulf and the skull of Gill, that you shall see the dead bodies of the entire regiment of Munkholm pass through your hostelry in review."

And the little man, binding Gill's skull to his belt, and drawing on his gloves, hurried, with the nimbleness of a goat, and by the help of Spiagudry's shoulders, through the opening in the roof, where he vanished.

A third knock shook the whole Spladgest, and a voice outside commanded him to open in the name of the king and viceroy. Then the keeper, moved alike by two different terrors, — one of which might be called the terror of memory, and the other of hope, — hurried toward the low door, and opened it.



VII.

In the pursuit of such pleasure as may be found in temporal felicity, she wore herself out, on rough and painful paths, without ever attaining her object. — *Confessions of Saint Augustine.*

RETURNING to his closet after leaving Poël, the governor of Throndhjem ensconced himself in a big easy-chair, and to distract his thoughts directed one of his secretaries to read over the petitions presented to the government.

Bowing low, the secretary began : —

"1. The Rev. Dr. Anglyvius prays that a substitute may be provided for the Rev. Dr. Foxtipp, the head of the Episcopal library, on account of his incompetency. The petitioner does not know who should take the place of the said incompetent doctor ; he would merely state that he, Dr. Anglyvius, has for a long time exercised the functions of librari—"

"Send the rascal to the bishop," interrupted the general.

"2. Athanasius Munder, priest and chaplain to the prisons, asks pardon for twelve penitent convicts on the occasion of the glorious marriage of his Grace, Ordener Guldenlew, Baron Thorwick, Knight of the Dannebrog, son of the viceroy, and the noble lady Ulrica d'Ahlefeld, daughter of his Grace the lord high chancellor of the two kingdoms."

"Lay it on the table," said the general. "I pity convicts."

"3. Faustus-Prudens Destrombidès, Norwegian subject and Latin poet, asks leave to write the epithalamium for the said noble pair."

"Ah, ha! The worthy man must be growing old, for he is the same man who wrote an epithalamium in 1674, for the marriage planned between Schumacker, then Count of Griffenfeld, and Princess Louisa Charlotte of Holstein-Augustenburg, — a marriage which never took place. I fear," muttered the governor, "that Faustus-Prudens is destined to be the poet of broken matches. Lay his petition on the table, and go on. Inquire, on behalf of the said poet, if there be not a vacant bed at the Throndhjem hospital."

"4. The miners of Guldbrandsdal, the Färöe Islands, Sund-Moer, Hubfallo, Roeraas, and Kongsberg, petition to be released from the costs of the royal protectorate."

"These miners are restless. I hear that they are even beginning to grumble at our long delay in answering their petition. Let it be laid aside for mature consideration."

"5. Braal, fisherman, declares, in virtue of the Odelsrecht,¹ that he persists in his intention of buying back his patrimony.

"6. The magistrates of Næs, Loevig, Indal, Skongen, Stod, Sparbo, and other towns and villages of Northern Thronthjem, pray that a price may be set upon the head of the assassin, thief, and incendiary, Hans, said to be a native of Klipstadur, in Iceland. Nychol Orugix, executioner for the province of Thronthjem, who claims that Hans is his property, opposes the petition. Benignus Spiagudry, keeper of the Spladgest, to whom the corpse should belong, supports the petition."

"That robber is a very dangerous fellow," said the general, "particularly now that we are threatened with trouble among the miners. Issue a proclamation offering a thousand crowns reward for his head."

"7. Benignus Spiagudry, doctor, antiquary, sculptor, mineralogist, naturalist, botanist, lawyer, chemist, mechanic, physicist, astronomer, theologian, grammarian—"

"Why," broke in the general, "is not this the same Spiagudry who keeps the Spladgest?"

"Yes, to be sure, your Excellency," replied the secretary,—"keeper, for his Majesty, of the institution of the Spladgest, in the royal city of Thronthjem, sets forth that he, Benignus Spiagudry, discovered that the stars called fixed are not lighted by the star called the sun; *item*, that

¹ The Odelsrecht was a singular law establishing a species of entail among the Norwegian peasantry. Any man who was compelled to part with his patrimony might prevent the purchaser from transferring it, by declaring every tenth year that he intended to buy it back.

the real name of Odin is Frigg, son of Fridulf; *item*, that the marine lobworm feeds on sand; *item*, that the noise of the inhabitants drives the fish away from the coast of Norway, so that the means of subsistence are growing less in proportion to the increase of the population; *item*, that the fjord known as Otte-Sund was formerly known as Limfjord, and only took the name of Otte-Sund after Otho the Red cast his spear into it; *item*, he sets forth that it was by his advice and under his direction that an old statue of Freya was changed into the statue of Justice, which now adorns the market-place in Thronhjelm, and that the lion found at the feet of the idol has been turned into a devil, symbolizing crime; *item* —”

“Oh, spare me the rest of his eminent services! Let me see, — what does he want?”

The secretary turned over several pages, and went on:

“Your most humble petitioner feels that he may justly petition your Excellency, in return for so many useful labors in the domain of science and literature, to increase the reward to ten escalins for every corpse, male or female, which cannot but be gratifying to the dead, as proving the value set upon their bodies.”

Here the door opened, and the usher in a loud voice announced, “The noble lady, Countess d’Ahlefeld.”

At the same time a tall woman, wearing the small coronet of a countess, richly dressed in scarlet satin trimmed with gold fringe and ermine, entered, and accepting the hand which the general offered her, seated herself beside him.

The countess was perhaps fifty years old. Age had added little to the furrows with which pride and ambition had long since marked her face. She looked at the old governor haughtily, and with an artificial smile.

"Well, General, your ward delays. He should have been here before sunset."

"He would have been here, my lady Countess, if he had not gone to Munkholm upon his arrival."

"To Munkholm! I hope it was not to see Schumacker?"

"That may be."

"Could Baron Thorwick's first visit be to Schumacker!"

"Why not, Countess? Schumacker is unfortunate and unhappy."

"What, General! Is the viceroy's son on familiar terms with a prisoner of state?"

"When Frederic Guldenlew confided his son to my care, he begged me, noble lady, to bring him up as if he were my own. I thought that an acquaintance with Schumacker might be useful to Ordener, who is destined some day to wield such power; consequently, with the viceroy's permission, I obtained from my brother, Grummond de Knud, a permit to enter all the prisons, which I gave to Ordener. He often uses it."

"And how long, noble General, has Baron Ordener had the pleasure of this useful acquaintance?"

"Rather more than a year, Countess. It seems that Schumacker's society pleased him, for it kept him at Thronhjelm for a long time; and it was only reluctantly, and by my express request, that he left the city last year to visit Norway."

“And does Schumacker know that his comforter is the son of one of his greatest enemies?”

“He knows that he is a friend, and that is enough for him, as for us.”

“But you, General,” said the countess, with a searching look, “when you tolerated — nay, encouraged — this connection, did you know that Schumacker had a daughter?”

“I knew it, noble Countess.”

“And this fact seemed to you of no importance to your pupil?”

“The pupil of Levin de Knud, the son of Frederic Guldenlew, is an honest man. Ordener knows the barrier which separates him from Schumacker’s daughter; he is incapable of winning the affection, unless his purpose was upright, of any girl, above all the daughter of an unfortunate man.”

The noble Countess d’Ahlefeld blushed and paled. She turned away her head to avoid the calm gaze of the old man, as if it were that of an accuser.

“But,” she stammered, “this connection strikes me, General, — let me speak my mind, — as strange and imprudent. It is said that the miners and tribes of the North are threatening to revolt, and that the name of Schumacker is mixed up with the affair.”

“Noble lady, you surprise me!” exclaimed the governor. “Schumacker has hitherto borne his misfortunes calmly. The report is doubtless ill-founded.”

At this moment the door opened, and the usher announced that a messenger from his Grace the lord high chancellor wished to speak with the noble countess.

The lady rose hurriedly, took leave of the governor, and while he continued his inspection of the petitions she hastened to her apartments in a wing of the palace, directing that the messenger should follow her.

She had been seated on a rich sofa in the midst of her women for a few instants only, when the messenger entered. The countess on seeing him made a slight gesture of aversion, which she hid at once by a friendly smile.

And yet the messenger's appearance was not at all repulsive. He was a man of somewhat diminutive stature, whose plumpness suggested anything else rather than a messenger. Still, a close study of his face showed it to be frank to the point of impudence, and his look of good-humor had a spice of deviltry and malice. He bowed low to the countess, and offered her a package sealed with silk thread.

"Noble lady," said he, "deign to permit me to venture to lay at your feet a precious message from his Grace your illustrious husband, my revered master."

"Is he not coming himself? And why did he choose you as his messenger?" inquired the countess.

"Important business delays the coming of his Grace, as this letter will inform you, Madam. For myself, I am by the orders of my noble master to enjoy the distinguished honor of a private interview with you."

The countess turned pale, and exclaimed in a trembling voice, "With me, — me, Musdæmon?"

"If it distresses the noble lady in the slightest degree, her unworthy servant will be reduced to despair."

"Distress me! No, of course not," returned the coun-

tess, trying to smile. "But is this conversation so essential?"

The messenger bowed down to the ground.

"Absolutely essential. The letter which the illustrious countess has deigned to receive from my hands probably contains a formal order to that effect."

It was strange to see the proud Countess d'Ahlefeld tremble and turn pale before a servant who paid her such profound respect. She slowly opened the package and read its contents. After a second reading she turned to her women, and said in a faint voice: "Go; leave us alone."

"I hope the noble lady," said the messenger, bending his knee, "will deign to pardon the liberty which I venture to take and the trouble which I seem to cause her."

"On the contrary," replied the countess, with a forced smile, "I assure you that I am very happy to see you."

The women withdrew.

"Elphega, have you forgotten that there was a time when you were not averse to being alone with me?"

It was the messenger who addressed the noble countess, and the words were accompanied by a laugh like that uttered by the Devil, at the instant that his compact expires and he seizes the soul which sold itself to him.

The great lady bowed her humbled head.

"Would that I had indeed forgotten it!" she murmured.

"Poor fool! Why should you blush for things which no human eye ever saw?"

"God sees what men do not see."

"God, weak woman! You are not worthy to deceive your husband, for he is less credulous than you."

"Your insults to my remorse are scarcely generous, Musdæmon."

"Well, if you feel remorse, Elphega, why insult it yourself by daily committing fresh crimes?"

The Countess d'Ahlefeld hid her face in her hands; the messenger continued: "Elphega, you must choose: remorse and more crimes, or crime and no more remorse. Do as I do: choose the second course; it is better—at least it is more cheerful."

"Heaven grant," said the countess, in low tones, "that those words may not be counted against you in eternity."

"Come, my dear, a truce to jest."

Then Musdæmon, seating himself behind the countess, and putting his arm about her neck, added: "Elphega, try to be, at least in imagination, what you were twenty years ago."

The unfortunate countess, the slave of her accomplice, strove to respond to his loathsome caresses. There was something too revolting, even for these degraded souls, in this adulterous embrace of two beings who scorned and despised each other. The illegal caresses which had once delighted them, and which some horrible and unknown expediency compelled them still to lavish upon each other, now tortured them. Strange but just change of guilty affections! Their crime had become their punishment.

The countess, to cut short this guilty torment, at last asked her odious lover, tearing herself from his arms, with what verbal message her husband had charged him.

"D'Ahlefeld," said Musdæmon, "just as he was about to see his power confirmed by the marriage of Ordener Guldenlew to our daughter —"

"Our daughter!" exclaimed the haughty countess; and she fixed her eye on Musdæmon with a look of pride and contempt.

"Well," coldly continued the messenger, "I think that Ulrica is at least as much mine as his. I was saying that the match would not be wholly satisfactory to your husband unless Schumacker could at the same time be destroyed. In his remote prison the old favorite is yet almost as much to be dreaded as in his palace. He has obscure but powerful friends at court, — powerful because they are obscure; and the king, learning a month since that the chancellor's negotiations with the Duke of Holstein-Ploen were at a standstill, cried out impatiently: 'Griffenfeld knew more than all of them put together.' A schemer named Dispolsen, come from Munkholm to Copenhagen, had several secret interviews with him, after which the king sent to the chancellor's office for Schumacker's patents of nobility and title-deeds. No one knows the object of Schumacher's ambition; but if he desire nothing but his liberty, for a prisoner of state that is the same as to desire power! He must therefore die, and must die by authority of justice; we are now striving to invent a crime for him. Your husband, Elphega, on the plea of inspecting the northern provinces incognito, will assure himself of the result of our underhand dealings among the miners, whom we hope to incite to rebel, in Schumacker's name, which revolt we can easily put

down later. What troubles us is the loss of certain important papers relating to this plot, and which we have every reason to believe have fallen into the hands of Dispolсен. Knowing that he had set out to return to Munkholm, carrying to Schumacker his parchments, his diplomas, and possibly these documents which might ruin, or at least compromise us, we posted certain faithful men in the gorges of Kiölen, directing them to rid us of him, after robbing him of his papers. But if, as we are assured, Dispolсен left Bergen by water, our efforts in that quarter are in vain. However, as I came along I gathered vague reports of the murder of a captain by the name of Dispolсен. We shall see. Meantime we are searching for a famous bandit, Hans, called Hans of Iceland, whom we wish to put at the head of the revolt in the mines. And you, my dear, — what news have you for me here? Has the pretty bird at Munkholm been caught in her cage? Has the old minister's daughter finally fallen a prey to our *falco fulvus*, our son Frederic?"

The countess, recovering her pride, again exclaimed: "Our son!"

"I faith, how old may he be? Twenty-four. We have known each other some twenty-six years, Elphega."

"God knows," cried the countess, "my Frederic is the chancellor's lawful heir."

"If God knows it," laughingly replied the messenger, "the Devil does not. Moreover, your Frederic is but a presumptuous youngster, quite unworthy of me, and it is not worth our while to quarrel for such a trifle. He is only fit to make love to a girl. Has he at least succeeded?"

“Not yet, so far as I know.”

“Oh, Elphega, do try to play a less passive part in our affairs. The count and myself, as you see, are tolerably active. I return to your husband to-morrow. For mercy’s sake, do not confine yourself to praying for our sins, like the Madonna whom the Italians invoke when about to commit a murder! D’Ahlefeld, too, must see to rewarding me a little more munificently than he has hitherto done. My fortune is closely connected with yours; but I am tired of being the husband’s servant when I am the wife’s lover, and of being only the tutor, the teacher, the pedagogue, when I am almost the father.”

At this instant midnight struck, and one of the women entered, reminding the countess that by the palace regulations all lights must be put out at that hour.

The countess, glad to end a painful interview, recalled her attendants.

“Permit me, gracious Countess,” said Musdæmon, as he withdrew, “to retain a hope of seeing you to-morrow, and to lay at your feet my homage and sincere respect.”



VIII.

It cannot be but thou hast murdered him ;
So should a murderer look ; so dead, so grim !

SHAKESPEARE : *Midsummer Night's Dream*.

“UPON my honor, old man,” said Ordener to Spiagudry, “I began to think that the corpses who lodge in this building would have to open the door.”

“Excuse me, sir,” replied the keeper, in whose ears the names of king and viceroy still rang, as he repeated his trite excuse, “I was—I was sound asleep.”

“Then I suppose your dead men do not sleep, and it was probably they whom I heard talking just now.”

Spiagudry was confused.

“You — stranger, — you — heard ?”

“Oh, yes ! but what does it matter ? I did not come here to meddle with your affairs, but to interest you in mine. Let us go inside.”

Spiagudry was by no means anxious to allow the new-comer to see Gill's body, but these last words comforted him considerably; and besides, how could he prevent his entrance?

He accordingly allowed the young man to pass, and closing the door, said: "Benignus Spiagudry is at your service in all that relates to human science; yet if, as your unseasonable visit seems to show, you suppose that you are dealing with a sorcerer, you are wrong; *ne famam credas*; I am only a learned man. Enter my laboratory, stranger."

"Not at all," said Ordener; "my errand is with these corpses."

"These corpses!" said Spiagudry, beginning to tremble again. "But, sir, you cannot see them."

"What! I cannot see bodies which are placed here for the sole purpose of being seen! I repeat, that I wish to question you concerning one of them; it is your duty to answer. Obey cheerfully, old man, or you will be forced to obey."

Spiagudry had a sincere respect for swords, and he saw the flash of steel at Ordener's side.

"*Nihil non arrogat armis*," he muttered; and fumbling with his bunch of keys, he opened the grating, and admitted the stranger into the second section of the hall.

"Show me the captain's clothes," said the latter.

At this instant a ray from the lamp fell upon Gill Stadt's bloody head.

"Good God!" exclaimed Ordener, "what abominable sacrilege!"

"Great Saint Hospitius, pity me!" sighed the poor keeper.

"Old man," continued Ordener, in threatening tones, "are you so remote from the tomb that you can safely violate the respect which is its due? And do you not fear, wretched fellow, that the living will teach you what you owe to the dead?"

"Oh," cried the poor keeper, "mercy! It was not I! If you only knew —" And he stopped; for he remembered the little man's words: "Be faithful, be dumb." "Did you see any one escape through that aperture?" he asked faintly.

"Yes; was it your accomplice?"

"No; it was the guilty man, the only guilty man! I swear it by all the torments of hell, by all the blessings of heaven, by this same body so infamously profaned!" and he fell upon the pavement before Ordener.

Hideous as Spiagudry was, there was yet an accent of truth in his despair and protestations, which convinced the young man.

"Old man," said he, "rise; and if you did not outrage death, do not degrade age."

The keeper rose. Ordener continued: "Who is the culprit?"

"Oh, silence, noble youth! You know not of whom you speak. Silence!"

And Spiagudry mentally repeated: "Be faithful, be dumb."

Ordener answered coldly: "Who is the culprit? I must know!"

"In Heaven's name, sir, do not say so! Be silent, for fear —"

"Fear will not silence me, but shall make you speak."

"Excuse me; forgive me, young master!" said the agonized Spiagudry. "I cannot."

"You can, for I insist. Tell me the profaner's name!" Spiagudry still strove to evade.

"Well, noble master, the profaner of this corpse is the assassin of that officer."

"Then that officer was murdered?" asked Ordener, reminded, by this abrupt transition, of the object of his search.

"Yes, undoubtedly, sir."

"And by whom, — by whom?"

"In the name of the saint on whom your mother called when she gave you birth, do not seek to know his name, young master; do not force me to reveal it."

"If my desire to know it required any spur, you would add it, old man, in the shape of curiosity. I command you to name the murderer."

"Well, then," said Spiagudry, "see these deep wounds, made by long, sharp nails on the body of this unfortunate man. They will name the assassin."

And the old man showed Ordener a number of ugly scratches on the naked, freshly washed corpse.

"What!" said Ordener, "was it some wild beast?"

"No, my young lord."

"But unless it was the Devil —"

"Hush! Beware, lest your guesses come too close to

the mark. Did you never hear," added the keeper in a low voice, "of a man or a monster with human face, whose nails are as long as those of Ashtaroth who ruined us all, or of Antichrist who will yet destroy us?"

"Speak more plainly."

"'Woe unto you!' says the Apocalypse —"

"I demand the assassin's name!"

"The assassin — his name? My lord, have pity on me; have pity on yourself!"

"The second of those prayers would destroy the first, even if serious reasons did not compel me to tear that name from your lips. Abuse my patience no longer."

"So be it, if you insist, young man," said Spiagudry, raising himself, and in a loud voice. "The murderer, the profaner, is Hans of Iceland."

This terrible name was not unknown to Ordener.

"What!" he cried, "Hans! that execrable bandit!"

"Do not call him a bandit, for he has no followers."

"Then, wretch, how do you know him? What common crimes have brought you together?"

"Oh, noble master, do not stoop to believe in appearances. Is the oak-tree poisonous because the serpent finds shelter within its trunk?"

"No idle words! A scoundrel has no friend who is not an accomplice."

"I am not his friend, and still less his accomplice; and if all my oaths fail to convince you, sir, let me implore you to observe that this monstrous sacrilege exposes me, twenty-four hours hence, when Gill Stadt's body is to be removed, to the torture allotted to those guilty of profa-

nation, and thus casts me into the most fearful state of anxiety ever endured by innocent man."

These considerations of personal interest moved Ordener more than the suppliant voice of the poor keeper, much of whose pathetic though useless resistance to the little man's sacrilegious act they had doubtless inspired. Ordener reflected a moment, while Spiagudry tried to read in his face whether this pause meant peace or boded a storm.

At last he said, in a severe though quiet tone: "Old man, speak the truth! Did you find any papers upon that officer?"

"None, upon my honor."

"Do you know if Hans of Iceland found any?"

"I swear by Saint Hospitius that I do not know."

"You do not know? Do you know where this Hans of Iceland hides?"

"He never hides; he roams about perpetually."

"Perhaps; but where is his den?"

"That pagan," whispered the old man, "has as many dens as the island of Hitteren has reefs, or the dog-star rays."

"I order you again," broke in Ordener, "to speak in plain terms. Let me set you an example; hearken. You are mysteriously allied with a brigand, whose accomplice you still declare that you are not. If you know him, you must know where he has gone. Do not interrupt me. If you are not his accomplice, you will not hesitate to lead me in search of him!"

Spiagudry could not contain his fright.

"*You*, noble lord! *you*, — great God! full of youth and life, — *you* would provoke, seek out that demon! When four-armed Ingjald fought the giant Nyctolm, at least, he had four arms!"

"Well," said Ordener, with a smile, "if four arms are a requisite, will you not be my guide?"

"I! your guide! How can you jest with an old man who almost needs a guide himself?"

"Listen," replied Ordener; "do not try to jest with me. If this profanation, of which I would fain believe you innocent, exposes you to be punished for sacrilege, you cannot stay here. You must fly. I offer you my protection, but on condition that you lead me to the brigand's lair. Be my guide, I will be your saviour. Nay, more: if I catch Hans of Iceland, I shall bring him here, dead or alive. You can then prove your innocence, and I promise to restore your office. Stay; meantime, here are more coins than your place brings you in a year."

Ordener, by keeping his purse until the last, had observed that gradation in his arguments required by the wholesome laws of logic. They were strong enough in themselves to make Spiagudry consider. He began by taking the money.

"Noble master, you are right," said he; and his eye, hitherto vague and uncertain, was fixed upon Ordener. "If I follow you, I incur the future vengeance of the terrible Hans. If I stay, I fall to-morrow into the hands of Orugix the hangman. What is the penalty of sacrilege? Never mind. In either case, my poor life is in danger; but as, according to the wise remark of Saemond-Sigfusson, other-

wise called the Sage, *inter duo pericula æqualia, minus imminens eligendum est*, I will follow you. Yes, sir, I will be your guide. Pray do not forget, however, that I have done all I could to dissuade you from your daring scheme."

"Very good," said Ordener. "Then you will be my guide. Old man," he added, with a meaning glance, "I count upon your fidelity."

"Oh, master!" replied the keeper, "Spiagudry's faith is as pure as the gold which you so graciously gave me."

"Let it remain so, or I will show you that the steel which I bear about me is as sterling as my gold. Where do you think Hans of Iceland is?"

"Why, as the southern part of the province of Throndhjem is full of troops sent thither on some errand of the lord chancellor, Hans must have gone in the direction of Walderhog cave, or toward Lake Miösen. Our road lies through Skongen."

"When can you start?"

"At the close of the day now dawning, when night falls and the Spladgest is closed, your poor servant will begin his duties as your guide, for which he must deprive the dead of his care. We will try to hide the mutilation of the miner from the eyes of the people for this one day."

"Where shall I meet you to-night?"

"In the market-place, if it please my master, near the statue of Justice, which was formerly Freya, and which will doubtless protect me with her shadow, in gratitude for the fine devil which I had carved at her feet."

Spiagudry would probably have repeated the terms of

his petition to the governor, had not Ordener interrupted him.

"Enough, old man ; it is a bargain."

"A bargain," repeated the keeper.

He had scarcely uttered these words, when a low growl was heard above their heads. The keeper shuddered.

"What is that?" he said.

"Is there not," asked Ordener, equally surprised, "any other living being dwelling here besides yourself?"

"You remind me of my assistant, Oglypiglap," replied Spiagudry, reassured by the thought. "It was probably his snores which we heard. A sleeping Lapp, Bishop Arngrimsson says, makes as much noise as a waking woman."

As they talked, they approached the door of the Spladgest. Spiagudry opened it softly.

"Good-by, young sir," he said to Ordener ; "may Heaven keep you merry. Good-by until to-night. If your road lead you by the cross of Saint Hospitius, deign to utter a prayer for your wretched servant, Benignus Spiagudry."

Then hastily closing the door, as much through fear of being seen as to guard his lamp from the early morning breezes, he returned to Gill's corpse, and did his best so to arrange it that the wound might not be perceived.

Many reasons combined to persuade the timid keeper to accept the stranger's perilous offer. The motives for his bold resolve may be ranked as follows: (1) fear of Ordener here and now; (2) dread of Orugix the hangman; (3) an ancient grudge against Hans of Iceland,—a grudge

which he scarcely dared acknowledge even to himself, so strong was the power of fear; (4) a love of science, which would benefit largely by his journey; (5) confidence in his own cunning, which would enable him to evade Hans; (6) a wholly speculative attraction for certain metal contained in the young adventurer's purse, and probably also in the iron casket stolen from the captain and intended for Widow Stadt, a message which now ran a great risk of never leaving the messenger's hands.

Still another and a final reason was the well or ill founded hope of returning sooner or later to the post which he was about to desert. Besides, what did it matter to him whether the robber killed the traveller, or the traveller the robber? At this point in his meditations he could not help saying aloud: "It will be one more corpse for me, anyhow."

Another growl was heard, and the unhappy keeper shivered.

"Indeed, that is not Oglypiglap's snore," said he; "that noise comes from without."

Then, after a moment's thought, he added: "How silly I am to be so frightened! The dog on the wharf probably waked and barked."

Then he finished his arrangement of Gill's disfigured remains, and closing all the doors, threw himself upon his mattress to sleep off the fatigue of the past night and gain strength for the coming one.

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IX.

Juliet. Oh, think'st thou we shall ever meet again ?

Romeo. I doubt it not : and all these woes shall serve
For sweet discourses in our time to come.

SHAKESPEARE : *Romeo and Juliet.*

THE signal-light at Munkholm castle had just been extinguished, and in its place the sailor entering Throindhjem fjord saw the helmet of the soldier on guard gleam from afar in the beams of the rising sun like a planet moving in its orbit, when Schumacker, leaning on his daughter's arm, came down as usual into the garden which surrounded his prison. Both had spent a restless night, — the old man unable to sleep, the maiden kept awake by happy thoughts. They walked in silence for a time ; then the aged prisoner said, fixing a sad and serious gaze upon the lovely girl : —

“ You blush and smile at your own thoughts, Ethel ; you are happy, for you have no cause to blush for the past, and you smile at the future.”

Ethel blushed still deeper, and her smile faded.

“ My lord and father,” she stammered in confusion, “ I brought the volume containing the Edda.”

“ Very well ; read, my daughter,” said Schumacker ; and he resumed his meditations.

Then the melancholy captive, seated on a black rock shaded by a dark fir, listened to his daughter's sweet voice

without heeding the words which she read, as a thirsty traveller delights in the murmur of the stream that quenches his fever.

Ethel read him the story of the shepherdess Allanga, who refused a king until he proved himself a warrior. Prince Ragnar-Lodbrok could not win the maid until he returned triumphant over the robber of Klipstadur, Ingulf the Destroyer.

Suddenly a sound of footsteps and the rustling of the foliage interrupted the reading and roused Schumacker from his revery. Lieutenant d'Ahlefeld appeared from behind the rock upon which they sat. Ethel's head drooped as she recognized their tormentor, and the officer exclaimed :—

"T'faith, fair lady, your lovely lips just uttered the name of Ingulf the Destroyer. I heard you, and I presume that you were talking of his grandson, Hans of Iceland, and that reminded you of him. Ladies love to talk of robbers. By the way, there are tales of Ingulf and his descendants which are both fearful and interesting. Ingulf the Destroyer had but one son, born of the witch Thoarka; that son also had but one son, whose mother was likewise a witch. For four centuries the race has been perpetuated thus for the desolation of Iceland, there being always a single scion, who never produces more than one offshoot. By this series of solitary heirs the infernal spirit of Ingulf has been handed down to the present day, and flourishes in the famous Hans of Iceland, who was doubtless so happy as to occupy your virgin thoughts just now."

The officer paused for an instant. Ethel was silent from

embarrassment, Schumacker from vexation. Delighted to find them willing, if not to answer, at least to listen, he added, — "The Klipstadur outlaw's one passion is a hatred of the human race, his one thought to harm them."

"He is wise," abruptly remarked the old man.

"He always lives alone," resumed the lieutenant.

"He is fortunate," said Schumacker.

The lieutenant was charmed by this double interruption, which seemed to seal a compact for conversation.

"May the god Mithra preserve us," he cried, "from such wise men and such fortunate men! Accursed be the evil-minded zephyr which brought the last demon of Iceland to Norway. I was wrong to say evil-minded, for they say it was a bishop to whom we owe the pleasure of possessing Hans of Klipstadur. If we may believe the story, certain Iceland peasants, having captured little Hans among the Bessestad mountains in his infancy, were about to kill him, as Astyages slew the Bactrian lion's whelp; but the bishop of Scalholt interfered, and took the cub under his own protection, hoping to make a Christian of the devil. The good bishop tried in a thousand ways to develop his infernal intellect, forgetting that the hemlock cannot be changed into a lily even in the hot-houses of Babylon. So when the young devil grew up, he repaid all this care by escaping one fine night upon the trunk of a tree, across the seas, lighting his flight by setting the bishop's house on fire. That's the old women's account of the way this Iceland came to Norway, and now, thanks to his education, he affords us a perfect type of the monster.

Since then the destruction of the Färöe mines, the death of three hundred men crushed beneath the ruins, the overthrow of the hanging rock at Golyn at midnight upon the village below, the fall of Half-Broer bridge from the rocks upon the high-road, the burning of Throndhjem cathedral, the extinction of beacon-lights upon the coast on stormy nights, and countless crimes and murders hidden in Lakes Sparbo or Miösen, or concealed in the caves of Walderhog and Ryllass, and in the gorges of the Dovrefjeld, bear witness to the presence of this Ahriman¹ incarnate in the province of Throndhjem. The old women declare that a new hair grows in his beard with every fresh crime; in that case his beard must be as luxuriant as that of the most venerable Assyrian magi. Yet you must have heard, fair lady, how often the governor has tried to stop the extraordinary growth of that beard."

Schumacker again broke the silence.

"And has every effort to capture this fellow," he asked with a look of triumph and an ironical smile, "been unsuccessful? I congratulate the chancellor."

The officer did not understand the ex-chancellor's sarcasm.

"Hans has hitherto proved as invincible as Horatius Cocles. Old soldiers, young militiamen, country boors, mountaineers, all fly or die before him. He is a demon who can neither be avoided nor caught; the best luck that can befall those who go in search of him is not to find him. You may be surprised, gracious lady," he went on, seating himself familiarly beside Ethel, who drew nearer

¹ The Persian god of evil.

to her father, "at all my curious anecdotes concerning this supernatural being. It was not without a purpose that I collected these strange traditions. It seems to me — and I shall be pleased if you, fair lady, share my opinion — that the adventures of Hans would make a delicious romance, after the style of *Mademoiselle de Scudéry's* sublime stories, 'Artamenes,' or 'Clelia,' only six volumes of which latter I have yet read, but it is none the less a masterpiece in my eyes. Of course we should have to soften our climate, dress up our traditions, and modify our barbarous names. For instance, *Throndhjem*, which I should call 'Durtinianum,' should see its forests converted, by a touch of my magic wand, into delightful groves watered by a thousand streamlets far more poetic than our hideous torrents. Our dark, deep caves should give place to charming grottos carpeted with gilded pebbles and azure shells. In one of these grottos should live a famous magician, *Hannus of Thule*. For you must own that the name *Hans of Iceland* is by no means agreeable. This giant, — you must feel that it would be absurd not to make the hero of such a work a giant, — this giant should descend in a direct line from the god *Mars* (*Ingulf the Destroyer* affords no food for imagination) and the enchantress *Theona*, — don't you think I have made a happy change in the name *Thoarka*? — daughter of the *Cumean sibyl*. *Hannus*, after being educated by the great *Magian of Thule*, should finally escape from the pontiff's palace in a car drawn by two dragons, — it would be very narrow-minded to cling to the shabby old legend of the trunk of a tree. Reaching the land of *Durtinianum*, and ravished by that enchanting

region, he should choose it as the place of his abode and the scene of his crimes. It would be no easy matter to draw an agreeable picture of the robberies of Hans. However, we might soften their horror by an ingeniously planned love-affair. The shepherdess Alcyppe, walking one day with her lamb in a grove of myrtles and olives, should be noticed by the giant, who should suddenly yield to the magic of her eyes. But Alcyppe should love the handsome Lycidas, an officer of the militia, garrisoned in her village. The giant should be annoyed by the centurion's happiness, and the centurion by the giant's attentions. You can fancy, dear lady, how charming such imaginative powers might make the adventures of Hannus. I will wager my Polish boots against a pair of slippers that such a subject, treated by Mademoiselle de Scudéry, would set all the women in Copenhagen wild with delight."

The last words roused Schumacker from the melancholy thoughts in which he had been buried during the lieutenant's fruitless display of brains.

"Copenhagen!" he exclaimed. "What news is there from Copenhagen, sir officer?"

"None, i' faith, that I know of," replied the lieutenant, "save that the king has given his consent to the great marriage which is just now occupying the thoughts of both kingdoms."

"What!" rejoined Schumacker; "what marriage?"

The appearance of a fourth speaker arrested the words on the lieutenant's lips.

All three looked up. The prisoner's moody features brightened, the lieutenant's frivolous face grew grave, and

Ethel's sweet countenance, which had been pale and confused during the officer's long soliloquy, again beamed with life and joy. She sighed heavily, as if her heart were eased of an intolerable weight, and her sad smile rested upon the new-comer. It was Ordener.

The old man, the girl, and the officer were placed in a singular position toward Ordener; they had each a secret in common with him, therefore each felt embarrassed by the presence of the other. Ordener's return to the donjon was no surprise to Schumacker or Ethel, who were expecting him; but it amazed the lieutenant as much as the sight of the lieutenant astonished Ordener, who might have feared some indiscretion on the part of the officer in regard to the scene of the previous night, if the silence ordained by the etiquette of duelling had not reassured him. He could therefore only be surprised at seeing him quietly seated between his two prisoners.

These four persons could say nothing while together, for the very reason that they would have had much to say had they been alone. Therefore, aside from glances of intelligence and embarrassment, Ordener met with an absolutely silent reception.

The lieutenant burst out laughing.

"By the train of the royal mantle, my dear new-comer, here's a silence by no means unlike that of the senators of Gaul when Brennus the Roman — Upon my honor, I have forgotten which were the Romans and which the Gauls, — the senators or the general. Never mind. Since you are here, help me to enlighten this worthy old gentleman as to the news. I was just about to tell him,

when you made your sudden entry on the stage, about the famous marriage which is now absorbing both Medes and Persians."

"What marriage?" asked Ordener and Schumacker with a single voice.

"By the cut of your clothes, sir stranger," cried the lieutenant, clapping his hands, "I guessed that you came from some other world. Your present question turns my doubt to certainty. You must have landed only yesterday on the banks of the Nidder in a fairy-car drawn by two winged dragons; for you could not have travelled through Norway without hearing of the wonderful marriage of the viceroy's son and the lord chancellor's daughter."

Schumacker turned to the lieutenant.

"What! Is Ordener Guldenlew to marry Ulrica d'Ahlefeld?"

"As you say," replied the officer; "and it will all be settled before the fashion of French farthingales reaches Copenhagen."

"Frederic's son must be about twenty-two years old, for I had been in Copenhagen fortress a year when the news of his birth reached me. Let him marry young," added Schumacker with a bitter smile. "When disgrace comes upon him, at least no one can accuse him of having aspired to a cardinal's hat."

The old favorite alluded to one of his own misfortunes, of which the lieutenant knew nothing.

"No, indeed," said he, laughing heartily. "Baron Ordener will receive the title of count, the collar of the Order

of the Elephant, and a colonel's epaulettes, which would scarcely match with the cardinal's hat."

"So much the better," answered Schumacker. Then after a pause he added, shaking his head as if he saw his revenge before him, "Some day they may make an iron collar of his fine order; they may break his count's coronet over his head; they may strike him in the face with his colonel's epaulettes."

Ordener seized the old man's hand.

"For the sake of your hatred, sir, do not curse an enemy's good fortune before you know whether it be good fortune in his eyes."

"Pooh!" said the lieutenant. "What are the old fellow's railings to Baron Thorwick?"

"Lieutenant," cried Ordener, "they may be more to him than you think. And," he added, after a brief silence, "your grand marriage is not so certain as you suppose."

"*Fiat quod vis*," rejoined the lieutenant, with an ironical bow; "the king, the viceroy, and the chancellor have, it is true, made every arrangement for the wedding; but if it displeases you, Sir Stranger, what matter the lord chancellor, the viceroy, and the king!"

"You may be right," said Ordener, seriously.

"Oh, by my faith!" — and the lieutenant threw himself back in a fit of laughter, — "this is too good! How I wish Baron Thorwick could hear a fortune-teller so well instructed in regard to the things of this world decide his fate. Believe me, my learned prophet, your beard is not long enough for a good sorcerer."

"Sir Lieutenant," coldly answered Ordener, "I do not

think that Ordener Guldenlew will ever marry a woman whom he does not love."

"Ha, ha! here we have the Book of Proverbs. And who tells you, Sir Greenmantle, that the baron does not love Ulrica d'Ahlefeld?"

"And, if it please you, in your turn, who tells you that he does?"

Here the lieutenant, as often happens, was led by the heat of the conversation into stating a fact of which he was by no means certain.

"Who tells me that he loves her? The question is absurd. I am sorry for your powers of divination; but everybody knows that this match is no less a marriage of inclination than of convenience."

"At least, everybody but me," said Ordener, gravely.

"Except you? So be it. But what difference does that make? You cannot prevent the viceroy's son from being in love with the chancellor's daughter."

"In love?"

"Madly in love!"

"He must indeed be mad to be in love with her."

"Hullo! don't forget of whom and to whom you speak. Would not one say that the son of the viceroy could not take a fancy to a lady without consulting this clown?"

As he spoke, the officer rose. Ethel, who saw Ordener's face flush, hurried toward him.

"Oh!" said she, "pray be calm; do not heed these insults. What does it matter to us whether the viceroy's son loves the chancellor's daughter or not?"

The gentle hand laid on the young man's heart stilled

the tempest raging within. He cast an enraptured glance at his Ethel, and did not hear the lieutenant, who, recovering his good-humor, exclaimed: "The lady acts with infinite grace the part of the Sabine woman interceding between her father and her husband. My words were rather heedless; I forgot," he added, turning to Ordener, "that there is a bond of brotherhood between us, and that we can no longer provoke each other. Chevalier, give me your hand. Confess, you too forgot that you were speaking of the viceroy's son to his future brother-in-law, Lieutenant d'Ahlefeld."

At this name Schumacker, who had hitherto looked on with an indifferent or merely an impatient eye, sprang from his stone seat with a terrible cry: "D'Ahlefeld! A D'Ahlefeld here! Serpent! How could I fail to recognize the abominable father in his son? Leave me in peace in my cell! I was not condemned to the punishment of seeing you. It only needs, as he desired just now, that the son of Guldenlew should join the son of d'Ahlefeld! Traitors! cowards! why do they not come themselves to enjoy my tears of madness and rage? Abhorred, abhorred race! Son of d'Ahlefeld, leave me!"

The officer, at first bewildered by the sharpness of these invectives, soon lost his temper and found his speech.

"Silence, lunatic! Cease your devilish litanies!"

"Leave me! leave me!" repeated the old man; "and take my curse, my curse upon you and the miserable race of Guldenlew, which is to be allied to you!"

"By Heaven!" exclaimed the enraged officer, "you insult me doubly!"

Ordener restrained the lieutenant, who was beside himself with passion.

"Respect an old man, even if he be your enemy, Lieutenant; we have already one question to settle together, and I will answer to you for the prisoner's offences."

"So be it," said the lieutenant; "you contract a double debt. The fight will be to the death, for I have both my brother-in-law and myself to avenge. Think that with my gauntlet you pick up that of Ordener Guldenlew."

"Lieutenant d'Ahlefeld," replied Ordener, "you espouse the cause of the absent with a warmth which proves your generosity. Would there not be as much in showing pity for an unfortunate old man to whom adversity gives some right to be unjust?"

D'Ahlefeld was one of those souls in whom virtue is kindled by praise. He pressed Ordener's hand, and approached Schumacker, who, exhausted by his emotion, had sunk back upon the rock, in the tearful Ethel's arms.

"Lord Schumacker," said the officer, "you abused the privileges of your age, and I might have abused the privileges of my youth, if you had not found a champion. I enter your prison this morning for the last time, for I come to tell you that you may henceforth remain, by special order of the viceroy, free and unguarded in this donjon. Receive this good news from the lips of an enemy."

"Go!" said the old prisoner, in a hollow voice.

The lieutenant bowed and obeyed, inwardly pleased that he had won the approving glance of Ordener.

Schumacker sat for some time with folded arms and

bent head, buried in thought. Suddenly he looked up at Ordener, who stood before him in silence.

"Well?" said he.

"My lord Count, Dispolsen was murdered."

The old man's head again drooped upon his breast. Ordener went on: "His assassin is a noted robber,—Hans of Iceland."

"Hans of Iceland!" said Schumacker.

"Hans of Iceland!" repeated Ethel.

"He robbed the captain," added Ordener.

"And so," said the old man, "you heard nothing of an iron casket, sealed with the arms of Griffenfeld?"

"No, my lord."

Schumacker hid his face in his hands.

"I will restore it to you, my lord Count; trust me. The murder was committed yesterday morning. Hans fled toward the north. I have a guide who knows all his haunts. I have often roamed through the mountains of Throndhjem. I shall overtake the thief."

Ethel turned pale. Schumacker rose; his expression was almost joyful, as if he believed that virtue still existed in men.

"Noble Ordener," he said, "farewell." And raising his hand to heaven, he disappeared among the bushes.

As Ordener turned, he saw Ethel upon the moss-grown rock, pale as an alabaster image on a black pedestal.

"Good God, Ethel!" he cried, rushing to her and supporting her in his arms, "what is the matter?"

"Oh!" replied the trembling girl in scarcely audible tones. "Oh, if you have, I do not say a spark of love,

but of pity for me, sir, if you did not speak yesterday only to deceive me, if it be not to cause my death that you have deigned to enter this prison, Lord Ordener, my Ordener, give up, in Heaven's name, in the name of all the angels, — give up your mad scheme! Ordener, my beloved Ordener!" she continued, — and her tears flowed freely, her head rested on the young man's breast, — "make this sacrifice for me. Do not follow this robber, this frightful demon, with whom you would fight. In whose interest do you go, Ordener? Tell me, what interest can be dearer to you than that of the wretched woman whom but yesterday you called your beloved wife?"

She stopped, choked by sobs. Both arms were thrown around Ordener's neck, and her pleading eyes were fixed upon his.

"My adored Ethel, you are needlessly alarmed. God helps the righteous cause, and the interest in which I expose myself is no other than your own. That iron casket contains —"

Ethel interrupted him: "My interest! Have I any other interest than your life? Ordener, what will become of me?"

"Why do you think that I shall die, Ethel?"

"Ah! Then you do not know this Hans, — this infernal thief? Do you know what a monster you pursue? Do you know that he is lord of all the powers of darkness; that he overthrows mountains upon towns; that subterranean caverns crumble beneath his tread; that his breath extinguishes the beacons on every rocky coast? And how can you suppose, Ordener, that you can resist

this giant aided by the demon, with your white arms and feeble sword?"

"And your prayers, Ethel, and the thought that I am fighting for you? Be assured, Ethel, the bandit's strength and power have been greatly exaggerated. He is a man like ourselves, who deals out death until he himself be slain."

"Then you will not heed me? My words are nothing to you? Tell me, what is to become of me if you go; if you roam from danger to danger, exposing — for I know not what earthly interest — your life, which is mine, by yielding it to a monster?"

Here the lieutenant's tales recurred anew to Ethel's fancy, exaggerated by her love and terror. She went on in a voice broken by sobs: "I assure you, dear Ordener, they deceived you who told you that he was only a man. You should believe me rather than others, Ordener; you know that I would not mislead you. Thousands have tried to do battle with him; he has destroyed whole regiments. I only wish others would tell you the same; you might believe them and not go."

Poor Ethel's prayers would doubtless have shaken Ordener's bold resolve, if he had not gone so far. The words uttered by Schumacker in his despair on the previous evening came back to him and strengthened him in his purpose.

"I might, my dear Ethel, tell you that I would not go, and yet carry out my plan; but I will never deceive you, even to console you. I ought not, I repeat, to hesitate between your tears and your true interests. Your fortune,

your happiness, perhaps your life, — your very life, my Ethel, — are at stake.” And he clasped her affectionately in his arms.

“And what do I care?” she returned, weeping. “My friend, my Ordener, my delight, — for you know that you are my sole delight, — do not give me a fearful and certain misery in exchange for a slight and doubtful misfortune. What is fortune or life to me?”

“Your father’s life, Ethel, is also at stake.”

She tore herself from his arms.

“My father’s life?” she repeated in a low voice, turning pale.

“Yes, Ethel. This brigand, doubtless bribed by Count Griffenfeld’s enemies, has in his possession papers whose loss imperils the life of your father, already the object of so many attacks. I would die to win back those papers.”

Ethel was pale and dumb for some moments. Her tears were dried, her heaving breast labored painfully; she looked on the ground with a dull and indifferent gaze, — the gaze of the condemned man as the axe is lifted over his head.

“My father’s life!” she sighed.

Then she slowly turned her eyes toward Ordener.

“What you do is useless; but do it.”

Ordener pressed her to his bosom. “Oh, noble girl, let me feel your heart beat against mine! Generous friend! I will soon return. Nay, you shall soon be mine; I would save your father, that I may better deserve to be his son. My Ethel, my beloved Ethel!”

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Who can describe the emotions of a true heart which feels that it is appreciated by another noble heart? And if the love uniting these two similar souls be an indissoluble bond, who can paint their indescribable raptures? It seems as if they must feel, crowded into one brief instant, all the joy and all the glory of life, embellished by the charm of generous sacrifice.

"Oh, my Ordener, go; and if you never return, grief will kill me. I shall have that tardy consolation."

Both rose, and Ordener placed Ethel's arm within his own, and took that adored hand in his. They silently traversed the winding alleys of the gloomy garden, and reluctantly reached the gate which led into the world. There, Ethel, drawing a pair of tiny gold scissors from her bosom, cut off a curl of her beautiful black hair.

"Take it, Ordener; let it go with you; let it be happier than I am."

Ordener devotedly pressed to his lips this gift from his beloved.

She added: "Ordener, think of me; I will pray for you. My prayers may be as potent with God as your arms with the demon."

Ordener bowed before this angel. His soul was too full for words. They remained clasped in each other's arms for some time. As they were about to part, perhaps forever, Ordener, with a sad thrill, enjoyed the happiness of holding Ethel to his heart once more. At last, placing a long, pure kiss upon the sweet girl's clouded brow, he rushed violently down the winding stairs, which a moment later echoed with the sweet and painful word, "Farewell!"



X.

You would never think her unhappy. Everything about her speaks of happiness. She wears necklaces of gold, and purple robes. When she goes out, a throng of vassals lie prostrate in her path, and obedient pages spread carpets before her feet. But none see her in the solitude that she loves ; for then she weeps, and her husband does not see her tears. — I am that miserable being, the spouse of an honorable man, of a noble count, the mother of a child whose smiles stab me to the heart. —
MATURIN: *Bertram*.

THE Countess d'Ahlefeld rose after a sleepless night to face a restless day. Half-reclining on a sofa, she pondered the bitter after-taste of corrupt pleasures, and the crime which wastes life in ecstasy without enjoyment and grief without alleviation. She thought of Musdœmon, whom guilty illusions had once painted in such seductive colors, so frightful now that she had penetrated his mask and seen his soul through his body. The wretched woman wept, not because she had been deceived, but be-

cause her eyes were no longer blinded, — tears of regret, but not of repentance ; therefore her tears afforded her no relief. At this moment her door was opened. She dried her eyes quickly, and turned away, annoyed at being surprised, for she had given orders that she was not to be disturbed. On seeing Musdæmon her vexation changed to fright, which was dispelled when she found that her son Frederic was with him.

“Mother,” cried the lieutenant, “how does it happen that you are here ? I thought you were at Bergen. Have our fine ladies taken to running about the country ?”

The countess received Frederic with kisses, to which, like all spoiled children, he responded very coldly. This was possibly the worst of punishments to the unhappy woman. Frederic was her beloved son, the only creature in the world for whom she felt an unselfish affection ; for a degraded woman often, even when all sense of wifely duty has vanished, retains some trace of the mother.

“I see, my son, that when you heard I was in Thronhjelm you hastened to me at once.”

“Oh, no ; not I. I was bored to death at the fort ; so I came to town, where I met Musdæmon, who brought me here.”

The poor mother sighed heavily.

“By the way, mother,” continued Frederic, “I am very glad to see you, for you can tell me whether knots of pink ribbon on the hem of the doublet are still worn in Copenhagen. Did you think to bring me a flask of that Oil of Youth to whiten the skin ? You did not forget, I hope, the last French novel, or the pure gold lace which I asked

you to get for my scarlet cloak, or those little combs which are so much used just now to hold the curls in place, or —”

The poor woman had brought nothing to her son, the only love she had on earth.

“My dear boy, I have been ill, and my sufferings prevented my thinking of your pleasures.”

“Have you been ill, mother? Well, are you better now? By the bye, how is my pack of Norman hounds? I’ll wager that they have neglected to bathe my monkey in rose-water every night. You’ll see that I shall find my parrot Bilboa dead on my return. When I am away no one thinks of my pets.”

“At least your mother thinks of you, my son,” said his mother in a faltering voice.

Had this been the inexorable hour when the destroying angel hurls sinful souls into everlasting torments, he would have felt pity for the torture which at this instant wrung the heart of the unfortunate countess. Musdemon laughed in his sleeve.

“Sir Frederic,” said he, “I see that the steel sword has no desire to rust in its iron scabbard. You do not care to lose the wholesome traditions of Copenhagen drawing-rooms within the walls of Munkholm. But yet, allow me to ask you, what is the use of all this Oil of Youth, these pink ribbons, and little combs? What is the use of all these preparations for a siege, if the only feminine fortress within the walls of Munkholm is impregnable?”

“Upon my honor, she is,” laughingly responded Frederic. “Certainly, if I have failed, General Schack himself would fail. But how can you surprise a fortress where

nothing is exposed, — where every post is unremittingly guarded? How can you contend against chemisettes which cover all but the neck, against sleeves that hide the whole arm, so that only the face and hands remain to prove that the young woman is not as black as the Emperor of Mauritania? My dear tutor, you yourself would have to go to school again. Believe me, that fort is not to be taken where Modesty is garrisoned."

"Indeed!" said Musdæmon. "But may not Modesty be forced to surrender, if Love lay siege to it, instead of confining himself to a blockade of delicate attentions?"

"Labor in vain, my dear friend. Love is already in possession of the place, but he serves to reinforce Modesty."

"Ah, Sir Frederic, this is news indeed, — with Love on your side —"

"And who tells you, Musdæmon, that he is on my side?"

"On whose, then?" exclaimed Musdæmon and the countess, who had listened in silence until now, but who was reminded of Ordener by the lieutenant's last words.

Frederic was about to answer, and was already preparing a spicy account of the scene of the previous night, when he remembered the silence prescribed by the etiquette of duelling, which changed his gayety to confusion.

"I' faith," said he, "I don't know, — that of some clown perhaps, some retainer."

"Some soldier of the garrison?" said Musdæmon, laughing heartily.

"What, my son!" exclaimed the countess in her turn. "Are you sure that she loves a rustic, a serf? What luck, if you are sure of it!"

"Oh, of course I am sure. But it's not one of the soldiers of the garrison," added the lieutenant, with an offended air. "I am sure enough of what I say, however, to beg you, mother, to cut short my very unnecessary exile at that confounded castle."

The countess's face brightened on hearing of the young girl's fall. Ordener Guldenlew's eagerness to visit Munkholm now appeared to her in very different colors. She gave her son the benefit of them.

"You must give us an account, Frederic, of Ethel Schumacker's loves. I am not surprised; the daughter of a boor can only love a boor. Meantime, do not curse that castle which yesterday afforded you the honor of the first advances towards an acquaintance, from a certain distinguished personage."

"What, mother!" said the lieutenant, staring at her, — "what distinguished personage?"

"A truce to jests, my son. Did no one visit you yesterday? You see that I know all about it."

"I faith, more than I do, Mother. Deuce take me if I saw a face yesterday, except those of the masks carved beneath the cornices of those old towers."

"What, Frederic! You saw nobody?"

"No one, mother!"

In omitting to mention his antagonist of the donjon, Frederic obeyed the law which bound him to silence; besides, could that clodhopper be counted as any one?

"What!" said his mother. "Did not the viceroy's son visit Munkholm last night?"

The lieutenant laughed.

"The viceroy's son! Indeed, mother, you must be dreaming, or else you are joking."

"Neither, my son. Who was on guard yesterday?"

"I myself, mother."

"And you did not see Baron Ordener?"

"Not a bit of it," repeated the lieutenant.

"But consider, my boy, he may have entered in disguise. You never saw him, having been brought up at Copenhagen, while he was educated at Thronhjelm. Remember all the stories about his caprices and whims, and his eccentric ideas. Are you sure, my son, that you did not see any one?"

Frederic hesitated an instant.

"No," he cried, "no one. I can say no more."

"Then," replied the countess, "I suppose the baron did not go to Munkholm."

Musdæmon, at first surprised like Frederic, had listened attentively. He interrupted the countess.

"Allow me, noble lady. Master Frederic, pray tell me the name of the dependent loved by Schumacker's daughter."

He repeated his question; for Frederic, who for some moments had been lost in thought, did not hear him.

"I do not know; or rather — no, I do not know."

"And how, sir, do you know that she loves a dependent?"

"Did I say so? A dependent? — well, yes; he is a dependent."

The awkwardness of the lieutenant's position increased momentarily. This series of questions, the ideas to which they gave rise, his enforced silence, threw him into a confusion which he feared he could not much longer control.

"Upon my word, Mr. Musdæmon, and you, my lady mother, if a mania for asking questions be the latest fashion, you may amuse yourselves by questioning each other. For my part, I'll have nothing more to say to you."

And flinging open the door, he disappeared, leaving them plunged in an abyss of doubt. He hastened down into the courtyard, for he heard Musdæmon's voice calling him back.

He mounted his horse and rode toward the harbor, where he intended to take a boat for Munkholm, thinking that there he might find the stranger who had given rise to such serious thoughts in the greatest feather-brain of a feather-brained capital.

"If that was Ordener Guldenlew," he reflected, "then my poor Ulrica — But no; it is impossible that he could be such a fool as to prefer the penniless daughter of a prisoner of State to the wealthy daughter of an all-powerful minister. At any rate, Schumacker's daughter can be no more than a caprice; and there is nothing to hinder a man who has a wife from having a mistress too; in fact, it is quite the stylish thing. But no, it was not Ordener. The viceroy's son would never wear such a shabby jacket. And that old black plume without a buckle, beaten by the wind and rain! And that great

cloak, big enough for a tent! And that disordered hair, with no combs and no frizzes! And those boots with iron spurs, covered with mud and dust! Indeed, it could never be he. Baron Thorwick is a knight of the Dannebrog. That fellow wore no decoration. If I were a knight of the Dannebrog, I believe I should wear the collar of the order to bed. Oh, no! He had never even read 'Clelia.' No, it was not the viceroy's son."



XI.

If man could still retain his warmth of soul when experience has taught him, if he could inherit the legacies of time without bending beneath the weight, he would never attack those exalted virtues whose first lesson is ever self-sacrifice. — MADAME DE STAËL : *Germany*.

“ WELL, what is it? You, Poël! what brings you here?”

“Your Excellency forgets that you yourself summoned me.”

“Did I?” said the general. “Oh, I wanted you to hand me that portfolio.”

Poël handed the governor the portfolio, which he could have reached himself by stretching out his arm.

His Excellency mechanically replaced it without opening it; then he turned over some papers in an absent-minded way.

"Poël, I was going to ask you — What time is it?"

"Six o'clock in the morning," replied the general's servant, who was facing the clock.

"I was going to tell you, Poël — What is the news to-day at the palace?"

The general went on shuffling his papers, writing a few words on each with a preoccupied air.

"Nothing, your Excellency, except that we are still expecting my noble master, about whom I see the general is anxious."

The general rose from his big writing-table, and looked at Poël somewhat angrily.

"Your eyes are very poor, Poël. I, anxious about Ordener, indeed! I know the reason for his absence; I do not expect him yet."

General Levin de Knud was so jealous of his authority that he would have considered it compromised had a subaltern been able to guess his secret thoughts, and learn that Ordener had acted without his orders.

"Poël," he added, "you may go."

The servant left the room.

"Really," exclaimed the general when he was left alone, "Ordener uses and abuses his privileges. A blade too often bent will break. To make me spend a night in sleepless impatience! To expose General Levin to the sarcasms of a chancellor's wife and the conjectures of a servant! And all this that an aged enemy may have those first greetings which are due to an old friend! Ordener! Ordener! whims are destructive of liberty! Let him come, only let him come now, deuce take me if I don't

receive him as gunpowder does fire, — I'll blow him up! To expose the governor of Thronthjem to a servant's conjectures and a she-chancellor's sarcasms! Let him come!"

The general went on making marginal notes on his papers without reading them, so all-absorbing was his ill-temper.

"General! my noble father!" cried a familiar voice; and Ordener clasped in his arms the old man, who did not even try to repress a cry of joy.

"Ordener, my good Ordener! Zounds! how glad I am!" He collected his thoughts in the middle of his phrase. "I am glad, Baron, that you have learned to control your feelings. You seem pleased to see me again. It was probably to mortify your flesh, that you deprived yourself of that pleasure for a whole day and night."

"Father, you have often told me that an unfortunate enemy should be put before a fortunate friend. I come from Munkholm."

"Of course," said the general, "when the enemy's misfortune is imminent. But Schumacker's future —"

"Looks more threatening than ever. Noble General, there is an odious plot on foot against that unlucky man. Men born his friends, would ruin him; a man born his foe, must serve him."

The general, whose face had gradually cleared, interrupted Ordener.

"Very good, my dear Ordener. But what are you talking about? Schumacker is under my protection. What men? What plots?"

Ordener could scarcely have replied plainly to this question. He had but very vague gleams of light, very uncertain suspicions as to the position of the man for whom he was about to expose his life. Many will think that he acted foolishly; but young hearts do what they think right by instinct, and not from calculation; and besides, in this world, where prudence is so barren and wisdom so caustic, who denies that generosity is folly? All is relative on earth, where all is limited; and virtue would be the greatest madness if there were no God behind man. Ordener was at the age to believe and to be believed. He risked his life trustingly. Even the general accepted reasons which would not have borne calm discussion.

"What plots? What men? Good father, in a few days I shall have solved the mystery; then you shall know all that I know. I must start off again to-night."

"What!" cried the old man, "can you spare me but a few hours? Where are you going? Why are you going, my dear son?"

"You have sometimes allowed me, my noble father, to perform a praiseworthy act in secret."

"Yes, my brave boy; but you are going without knowing why, and you know what an important affair requires your presence here."

"My father has given me a month to consider the matter, and I shall devote that time to the interests of another. A good deed is often fruitful in good advice. Besides, we will see about it on my return."

"How!" anxiously asked the general; "don't you like

this match? They say that Ulrica d'Ahlefeld is very beautiful. Tell me, have you seen her?"

"I believe I have," said Ordener. "Yes, I believe that she is handsome."

"Well?" rejoined the governor.

"Well," said Ordener, "she will never be my wife."

These cold, decisive words startled the general as if he had received a violent blow. He recalled the suspicions of the haughty countess.

"Ordener," said he, shaking his head, "I ought to be wise, for I have sinned. Well, I am nothing but an old fool! Ordener, the prisoner has a daughter —"

"Oh," cried the young man, "General, I wanted to speak to you of her. I ask your protection, father, for that helpless and oppressed young girl."

"Indeed," said the governor, gravely, "your request is urgent."

Ordener recovered himself.

"And why should it not be urgent for a poor captive whose life, and, what is far more precious, her honor, is in danger?"

"Life! honor! Why, I still govern here, and I know nothing of all these horrors! Explain yourself."

"Noble father, the lives of the prisoner and his defenceless daughter are threatened by an infernal plot."

"What you say is serious. What proofs have you?"

"The oldest son of a powerful family is even now at Munkholm. He is there to seduce Countess Ethel; he told me so himself."

The general started back.

"Good God! Poor, forlorn creature! Ordener, Ordener, Ethel and Schumacker are under my protection. Who is this wretch? What is the name of the family?"

Ordener approached the general and wrung his hand.

"It is the D'Ahlefeld family."

"D'Ahlefeld!" said the governor. "Yes, it is all clear. Lieutenant Frederic is at Munkholm now. My noble Ordener, would they marry you to such a brood! I understand your aversion, Ordener."

The old man, folding his arms, thought for some moments, then clasped Ordener in his embrace.

"Ordener, you may go. Your friends shall not lack protection; I will guard them. Yes, go; you are perfectly right. That infernal Countess d'Ahlefeld is here; did you know it?"

"The noble lady, Countess d'Ahlefeld," said the usher, opening the door.

At that name, Ordener mechanically withdrew to the back of the room; and the countess, entering without seeing him, exclaimed, —

"General, your pupil is deceiving you. He never went to Munkholm."

"Indeed?" said the general.

"Good gracious, no! My son Frederic, who has just left the palace, was on duty yesterday in the donjon, and he saw no one."

"Really, noble lady?" repeated the general.

"So," added the countess, with a triumphant smile, "you need not wait for your Ordener any longer, General."

The governor was cold and calm.

"I am no longer expecting him, Countess, it is true."

"General," said the countess, turning, "I thought we were alone. Who is this?"

The countess looked searchingly at Ordener, who bowed.

"Really," she continued, "I never saw him but once; still, if it were not for that dress, I should say — General, is this the viceroy's son?"

"Himself, noble lady," said Ordener, with another bow.

The countess smiled.

"In that case, permit a lady who will soon be more closely allied to you, to ask where you were yesterday, Count?"

"Count! I do not think that I am so unfortunate as to have lost my noble father yet, my lady countess."

"Certainly not; that was not my meaning. It is better to become a count by taking a wife than by losing a father."

"One is no better than the other, noble lady."

The countess, although slightly confused, made up her mind to laugh heartily.

"Come, the stories that I have heard are true. Your manners are somewhat boorish; but you will grow more used to accepting gifts from fair hands when Ulrica d'Ahlefeld has put the chain of the Order of the Elephant about your neck."

"A chain indeed!" said Ordener.

"You will see, General Levin," resumed the countess,

whose laugh was somewhat forced, "that your intractable pupil will not consent to receive his colonel's brevet from a lady's hand either."

"You are right, Countess," replied Ordener; "a man who wears a sword ought not to owe his epaulettes to a petticoat."

The great lady's face darkened.

"Ho! ho! whence comes the baron? Is it really true that your Highness was not at Munkholm yesterday?"

"Noble lady, I do not always satisfy all questions. But, General, you and I will meet again."

Then, pressing the old man's hand and bowing to the countess, he quitted the room, leaving the lady, amazed at the extent of her own ignorance, alone with the governor, who was furious at the amount of his knowledge.



XII.

The fellow that sits next him now, parts bread with him, and pledges the breath of him in a divided draught, is the readiest man to kill him. —
SHAKESPEARE: *Timon of Athens*.

IF the reader will transport himself to the highway leading from Throndhjem to Skongen, a narrow, stony road which skirts Throndhjem Fjord until it reaches the village of Vygla, he will not fail to hear the footsteps of two travellers, who left the city by what is known as Skongen Gate, at nightfall, and are rapidly climbing the range of hills up which the path to Vygla winds. Both are wrapped in cloaks. One walks with a firm, youthful step, his body erect and his head well up; the point of his sword hangs below the hem of his cloak, and in spite of the darkness, we see the plume in his cap waving in the breeze. The other is rather taller than his companion, but

slightly bent ; upon his back is a hump, doubtless formed by a wallet which is hidden by his large black mantle, whose ragged edges bear witness to its long and faithful service. His only weapon is a stick, with which he supports his rapid and uneven steps.

If darkness prevent our reader from distinguishing the features of the two travellers, he may perhaps recognize them by the conversation which one of them opens after an hour of silent, consequently tedious travel.

"Master, my young master ! we have reached the point from which Vyglá tower and Thronðhjem spires may both be seen at the same time. Before us, on the horizon, that black mass is the tower ; behind us lies the cathedral ; its flying buttresses, darker still against the sky, stand out like the skeleton ribs of a mammoth."

"Is Vyglá far from Skongen ?" asked the other wayfarer.

"We have to cross the Ordals, sir ; we shall not reach Skongen before three o'clock in the morning."

"What hour is that striking now ?"

"Good heavens, master ! you make me shiver. Yes, that is Thronðhjem clock ; the wind brings the sound to us. That's a sign of storm. The northwest wind brings clouds."

"In truth, the stars have all disappeared behind us."

"Pray let us make haste, my noble lord, the storm is close at hand, and Gill's corpse and my escape may already have been discovered in the city. Let us make haste !"

"Willingly. Old man, your load seems heavy ; give it to me, I am younger and stronger than you."

"No, indeed, noble master; it is not for the eagle to carry the shell of the tortoise. I am too far beneath you for you to burden yourself with my wallet."

"But, old man, if it tires you? It seems heavy. What have you in it? Just now you stumbled, and it clinked as if there were iron in it."

The old man sprang away from the young man.

"It clinked, master? Oh, no! you are mistaken. It contains nothing — but food, clothes. No, it does not tire me, sir."

The young man's friendly offer seemed to give his old comrade a fright which he tried to disguise.

"Well," replied the young man, without noticing it, "if your bundle does not tire you, keep it."

The old man, although his fears were set at rest, made haste to change the conversation.

"It is hard to travel by night as fugitives, over a road which it would be so agreeable, sir, to take by day as observers of Nature. On the shores of the fjord, to our left, are a quantity of Runic stones, upon which may be studied inscriptions traced, they say, by gods and giants. On our right, behind the rocks at the edge of the road, lies the salt-marsh of Sciold, which undoubtedly communicates with the sea by some subterranean passage; for the sea lobworm is caught there, that strange fish, which, as your servant and guide discovered, eats sand. It was in the Vyglá tower, which we are now approaching, that the pagan king Vermond roasted the breasts of Saint Etheldreda, that glorious martyr, with wood from the true cross, brought to Copenhagen by Olaf III., and conquered from

him by the Norwegian king. They say that since then repeated attempts have been made to turn that cursed tower into a chapel; every cross placed there, is consumed in its turn by fire from heaven."

At this instant a tremendous flash of lightning covered the fjord, the hill, the rocks, the tower, and faded before the two travellers could distinguish any of these objects. They instinctively paused, and the lightning was almost immediately followed by a violent peal of thunder, which echoed from cloud to cloud across the sky, and from rock to rock along the earth.

They raised their eyes. All the stars were hidden, huge clouds rolled rapidly over one another, and the tempest hung like an avalanche above their heads. The tremendous blast, before which all these masses fled, had not yet descended to the trees, which no breath stirred, and upon which no drop of rain had as yet fallen. The roar of the storm was heard aloft, and this, with the noise of the fjord, was the only sound to be heard in the darkness of the night, made doubly dark by the blackness of the tempest.

This tumultuous silence was suddenly interrupted, close beside the travellers, by a growl which made the old man tremble.

"Omnipotent God!" he cried, grasping the young man's arm, "that is either the laugh of the Devil in the storm, or the voice of —"

A fresh flash, a fresh peal, cut short his words. The tempest then burst with fury, as if it had only waited this signal. The travellers drew their cloaks closer, to

protect themselves alike from the rain falling in torrents from the clouds, and from the thick dust swept in whirlwinds from the dry earth by a howling blast.

"Old man," said the youth, "a flash of lightning just now showed me Vygla tower on our right; let us leave the path and seek shelter there."

"Shelter in the Cursed Tower!" exclaimed the old man; "may Saint Hospitius protect us! Think, young master; that tower is deserted."

"So much the better, old man! We shall not be kept waiting at the door."

"Think of the abominable act which polluted it!"

"Well, let it purify itself by sheltering us. Come, old man, follow me. I tell you that on such a night I would test the hospitality of a den of thieves."

Then, in spite of the old man's remonstrances, he grasped his arm and hastened toward the building, which, as the frequent flashes showed him, was close at hand. As they approached, they saw a light in one of the loopholes of the tower.

"You see," said the young man, "that this tower is not deserted. You feel easier now, no doubt."

"Oh, my God! my God!" cried the old man, "where are you taking me, master? Saint Hospitius forbid that I should enter that oratory of the Devil!"

They had now reached the foot of the tower. The young traveller knocked loudly at the new door of this much dreaded ruin.

"Calm yourself, old man. Some pious hermit has come hither to sanctify this profane abode by dwelling in it."

"No," said his comrade, "I will not enter. I'll answer for it that no monk can live here, unless he has one of Beelzebub's seven chains for a chaplet."

However, a light had descended from one narrow window to another, and now shone through the key-hole.

"You are very late, Nychol!" cried a sharp voice; "the gallows was erected at noon, and it takes but six hours to come from Skongen to Vyglá. Did you have an extra job?"

These questions were asked just as the door was opened. The woman who opened it, seeing two strange faces instead of the one which she expected, uttered a frightened, threatening shriek, and started back.

Her appearance was by no means reassuring. She was tall; she held above her head an iron lamp, which threw a bright light upon her face. Her livid features, her bony, angular figure, were corpse-like, and her hollow eyes emitted ominous flashes like those of a funeral torch. She wore a red serge petticoat, reaching to her bare feet, and apparently stained in spots with deeper red. Her fleshless breast was half covered by a man's jacket of the same color, the sleeves of which were cut off at the elbow. The wind, coming in at the open door, blew about her head her long gray hair, which was insecurely fastened with a strip of bark, and lent an added ferocity to her savage face.

"Good lady," said the younger of the new-comers, "the rain falls in floods; you have a roof, and we have gold."

His aged comrade plucked him by the cloak, whispering, "Oh, master, what are you saying? If this be not the

abode of the Devil, it is the habitation of some robber. Our money, instead of protecting us, will be our ruin."

"Hush!" said the young man; and drawing a purse from his bosom, he displayed it to his hostess, repeating his request as he did so.

The woman, recovering from her surprise, studied them in turn with fixed and haggard eyes.

"Strangers," she cried at last, as if she had not heard their voices, "have your guardian angels forsaken you? What would you with the cursed inhabitants of the Cursed Tower? Strangers, they were no mortals who sent you here for shelter, or they would have told you: Better are the lightning and the storm than the hearth within Vyglá tower. The only living man who may enter here, enters the abode of no other human being; he only leaves solitude for a crowd; he lives only by death; he has no place save in the curses of men; he serves their vengeance only; he exists by their crimes alone; and the vilest criminal, in the hour of his doom, vents on him the universal scorn, and feels that he has a right to add to it his own contempt. Strangers! You must indeed be strangers, for your foot does not yet shrink with horror from the threshold of this tower. Disturb no longer the she-wolf and her cubs; return to the road travelled by the rest of mankind, and if you would not be shunned by your fellows, do not tell them that your face ever caught the rays of the lamp of the dwellers in Vyglá tower." With these words, pointing to the door, she advanced toward the two travellers. The old man trembled in every limb, and looked imploringly at the young man, who, understanding noth-

ing of the tall woman's words because of the great rapidity of her speech, thought her crazy, and was in no wise disposed to go out again into the rain, which still fell heavily.

"Faith, good hostess, you describe a strange character, whose acquaintance I would not lose this chance of making."

"His acquaintance, young man, is soon made, sooner ended. If your evil spirit urge you to seek it, go kill some living man, or profane the dead."

"Profane the dead!" repeated the old man, in a faltering voice, hiding himself in his companion's shadow.

"I scarcely comprehend," the latter said, "your suggestions, which seem somewhat indirect; it is shorter to stay here. No one but a madman would continue his journey in such weather."

"Unhappy man!" exclaimed the woman, "do not knock at the door of one who can open no door save that of the tomb."

"And if the door of the tomb should indeed open for me with that of your abode, woman, it shall not be said that I shrank from an ill-omened word. My sword is my safeguard. Come, close the door, for the wind is cold, and take this money."

"Bah! what is your money to me!" rejoined their hostess; "precious in your hands, in mine it would become more vile than pewter. Well, stay if you will, and give me the gold. It may protect you from the storms of Heaven; it cannot save me from the scorn of men. Nay; you pay a higher price for hospitality than others pay for

murder. Wait here an instant, and give me your gold. Yes, it is the first time that a man's hands have entered here filled with gold, without being stained with blood."

So saying, after putting down her lamp and barricading the door, she disappeared beneath the arch of a dark staircase built at the back of the room.

While the old man shuddered, and, invoking the glorious Saint Hospitius under every name, cordially, but in an undertone, cursed his young companion's imprudence, the latter took the light and surveyed the large circular apartment in which they had been left. What he saw as he approached the wall, startled him; and the old man, who had watched him closely, exclaimed, —

"Good God, master! a gallows?"

A tall gallows, in fact, rested against the wall, reaching to the keystone of the damp, high, arched roof.

"Yes," said the young man, "and here are saws of wood and iron, chains and iron collars; here is a rack, and huge pincers hanging over it."

"Holy saints of Paradise!" cried the old man; "where are we?"

The young man calmly went on with his inspection.

"This is a roll of hempen cord; here are furnaces and caldrons; this part of the wall is covered with tongs and scalpels; here are leathern whips with steel tips, an axe and a mace."

"This must be the wardrobe of hell!" interrupted the old man, terrified by this dreadful catalogue.

"Here," continued the other, "are copper screws, wheels with teeth of bronze, a box of huge nails, and a lever. In

truth, these are sorry furnishings. It may seem to you hard that my impatience should have brought you hither with me."

"Really, you agree to that!"

The old man was more dead than alive.

"Do not be frightened. What matters it where you are? I am with you."

"A fine protection!" muttered the old man, whose increasing terror modified his fear and respect for his young companion; "a sword three feet long against a gibbet nine feet high!"

The big, red woman returned, and again taking up the iron lamp, beckoned to the travellers to follow her. They cautiously climbed a narrow, rickety flight of stairs built in the thickness of the tower wall. At each loop-hole a blast of wind and rain threatened to extinguish the quivering flame of the lamp, which their hostess shielded with her long, transparent hands. After stumbling more than once upon a rolling stone, in which the old man's alarmed fancy saw human bones scattered over the stairs, they reached the next floor, and found themselves in a circular hall like the one below. In the centre, according to Gothic custom, burned a huge fire, the smoke of which escaped through a hole in the roof, but not without perceptibly obscuring the atmosphere of the hall. It was the light from this fire, combined with that of the iron lamp, which had caught the notice of the two wayfarers. A spit, loaded with fresh-killed meat, revolved before the flames. The old man turned from it in disgust.

"It was upon that execrable hearth," said he to his

comrade, "that the embers of the true cross consumed the limbs of a saint." A rude table stood some distance away from the fire. The woman invited the travellers to be seated at it.

"Strangers," said she, placing the lamp before them, "supper will soon be ready, and my husband will probably make haste to get here, for fear the midnight ghost should carry him off as it passes the Cursed Tower."

Ordener — for the reader has doubtless already guessed that he and his guide, Benignus Spiagudry, were the two travellers — could now examine at his leisure the strange disguise, in the concoction of which Benignus had exhausted all the resources of his fertile fancy, spurred on by a dread of recognition and capture. The poor fugitive had exchanged his reindeer-skin garments for a full suit of black, left at the Spladgest by a famous Throndhjem grammarian, who drowned himself in despair because he could not find out why "Jupiter" changed to "Jovis" in the genitive. His wooden shoes gave place to a stout pair of postilion boots, whose owner had been killed by his horses, in which his slender shanks had so much spare room that he could not have walked without the aid of half a truss of hay. The huge wig of an elegant young Frenchman, slain by thieves just outside the city gates, concealed his bald pate and floated over his sharp, crooked shoulders. One of his eyes was covered with a plaster, and, thanks to a pot of paint which he had found in the pocket of an old maid who died of disappointed love, his pale, hollow cheeks were tinged with an unwonted crimson, an ornament which the rain had now divided

with his chin. Before seating himself, he carefully placed beneath him the pack which he carried on his back, first wrapping it in his old mantle, and while he absorbed his comrade's entire attention, all his thoughts seemed centred in the roast which his hostess was watching, toward which he cast ever and anon a glance of anxiety and alarm. Broken ejaculations fell from his lips at intervals:

"Human flesh! *Horridas epulas!* Cannibals! A feast for Moloch! *Ne pueros coram populo Medea trucidet!* Where are we?—Atrous—Druidess—Irmensul—The Devil struck Lycaon with lightning—" Finally he exclaimed: "Good Heavens! God be thanked! I see a tail!"

Ordener, who, having watched and listened attentively, had closely followed the train of his thoughts, could not help smiling.

"That tail need not comfort you. It may be the Devil's hind quarter."

Spiagudry did not hear this pleasantry. His eyes were riveted on the back of the room. He trembled, and whispered in Ordener's ear,—

"Master, look yonder, on that heap of straw, in the shadow!"

"Well, what is it?" said Ordener.

"Three naked bodies,—the corpses of three children!"

"Some one is knocking at the door," cried the red woman, who was squatting by the fire.

In fact, a knock, followed by two louder raps, was heard above the ever-increasing din of the storm.

"It is he at last! It is Nychol!"

And seizing the lamp, their hostess hurried downstairs.

The two travellers had not had time to resume their conversation, when they heard a confused murmur of voices below, in the midst of which they caught these words, uttered in a voice which made Spiagudry start and shiver :

“Be quiet, woman; we shall stay. The thunderbolt enters without waiting for the door to be opened.”

Spiagudry pressed closer to Ordener.

“Master, master,” he quavered, “we are lost !”

The sound of footsteps was heard on the stairs, and two men in ecclesiastic dress entered the room, followed by the startled hostess.

One of these men was tall, and wore the black gown and close-clipped hair of a Lutheran minister; the other was shorter, and wore a hermit's robe tied with a girdle of rope. The hood drawn over his face concealed all but his long black beard, and his hands were entirely hidden by his flowing sleeves.

When he saw these two peaceful strangers, Spiagudry recovered from the terror which the peculiar voice of one of them had caused.

“Don't be alarmed, my good lady,” said the minister. “Christian ministers do good even to those who injure them; why should they harm those who help them? We humbly beg for shelter. If the reverend gentleman with me spoke harshly to you just now, he was wrong to forget the gentle voice recommended to us in our ordination vows. Alas! the most saintly may err. I lost my way on the road from Skongen to Throndhjem, and could find no guide through the darkness, no shelter from the

storm. This reverend brother, whom I encountered, being like myself far from home, deigned to allow me to accompany him hither. He praised your kind hospitality, dear lady; doubtless he was not mistaken. Do not say to us, like the wicked shepherd, '*Advene, cur intras?*' Take us in, worthy hostess, and God will save your crops from the storm, God will protect your flocks from the tempest, as you give a refuge to travellers who have gone astray!"

"Old man," broke in the woman in a fierce voice, "I have neither crops nor flocks."

"Well, if you are poor, God blesses the poor more than the rich. You and your husband shall live to a good old age, respected, not for your wealth, but for your virtues; your children shall grow up blessed in the esteem of all men, and be what their father was before them."

"Silence!" cried the hostess. "If they continue to be what we are, our children must grow old as we have, scorned by all,—a scorn handed down from generation to generation. Silence, old man! Your blessing turns to curses on our heads."

"Heavens!" returned the minister, "who then are you? Amid what crimes do you pass your life?"

"What do you call crime? What do you call virtue? We enjoy one privilege,—we can possess no virtue and commit no crime."

"The woman's reason wanders," said the minister, turning to the little hermit, who was drying his coarse robe before the fire.

"No, priest!" replied the woman. "Learn where you

are. I would rather inspire horror than pity. I am not mad, but the wife of —”

A prolonged and violent knocking at the door drowned her words, to the great disappointment of Spiagudry and Ordener, who had silently listened to the dialogue.

“Cursed,” muttered the red woman, “be the mayor and council of Skongen, who gave us this tower so near the high-road for our dwelling! Perhaps that is not Nychol, now.”

Still, she took up the lamp.

“After all, if it be another traveller, what matters it? The brook can flow where the torrent has passed.”

The four travellers, left alone, examined each other by the firelight. Spiagudry, terrified at first by the hermit's voice, and then reassured by his black beard, might have trembled afresh if he had seen the piercing eye with which the monk observed him from beneath his cowl.

In the general silence the minister ventured a question: “Brother monk, I presume that you are one of the Catholic priests who escaped from the last persecution, and that you were returning to your retreat when I was fortunate enough to meet you. Can you tell me where we are?”

The broken door of the ruined staircase opened before the hermit could answer.

“Woman, let a storm but burst, and there is always a crowd to sit at our hated board and take shelter beneath our accursed roof.”

“Nychol,” replied the wife, “I could not help it!”

“What do I care how many guests you have, provided

they pay ? Money is as well earned by lodging a traveller as by strangling a thief."

The speaker paused at the door, and the four strangers had ample opportunity to examine him. He was a man of colossal size, dressed, like their hostess, in red serge. His enormous head seemed to rest directly upon his broad shoulders, in strong contrast with his gracious lady's long, bony neck. He had a low forehead, flat nose, and thick eyebrows ; his eyes, rimmed with red, shone like burning coals in a pool of blood. The lower part of his face was shaved smooth, exposing his big mouth, whose black lips were parted in a hideous grin, like the gaping edges of a never-healing wound. Two wisps of frizzled beard, extending from his cheeks to his chin, made his face seem square when seen from the front. He wore a gray felt hat, which dripped with rain, and which he did not deign to remove in the presence of the four travellers.

As he looked at him, Benignus Spiagudry uttered a cry of fright, and the Lutheran minister turned away, struck with horror and surprise ; while the master of the house, recognizing, addressed him thus : " What, are you here, minister ! Indeed, I did not expect to have the pleasure of seeing your scared and woebegone face again to-day."

The priest mastered his first feeling of repulsion. His face became serious and serene.

" And I, my son, rejoice at the chance which has brought together the shepherd and the lost sheep, to the end, no doubt, that the sheep may return to the fold."

" Ah, by Haman's gibbet," rejoined the other with a

loud laugh, "this is the first time that ever I was compared to a sheep! Believe me, Father, if you would flatter the vulture, you must not call him a dove."

"He who can change the vulture to a dove, consoles, my son, and does not flatter. You think that I fear you, and I only pity you!"

"You must indeed have a goodly store of pity. I should have fancied that you had exhausted it all on that poor devil to whom you displayed your cross this morning in the hope of hiding my gallows from his eyes."

"That unfortunate man," replied the priest, "was less to be pitied than you; for he wept, and you laugh. Happy is he who learns in the moment of atonement how much less powerful is man's arm than the word of God!"

"Well said, Father!" replied the host, with a horrid and ironical mirth. "Happy is he who weeps! That fellow to-day, moreover, had no other fault than that of loving the king so much that he could not live without making his Majesty's picture upon little copper medals, which he then gilded artistically to render them more worthy of the royal effigy. Our gracious sovereign was not ungrateful, and rewarded him for such a display of affection with a fine hempen decoration, which, let me inform my worthy guests, was conferred upon him this very day, in Skongen market-place, by me, lord chancellor of the Order of the Gibbet, assisted by this gentleman here present, grand chaplain of the said order."

"Stop, wretched man!" broke in the priest. "How can he who punishes forget that punishment awaits us all? Listen to the thunder —"

"Well, what is thunder? Satan's laughter."

"Good God, he has just looked on death, and he blasphemes!"

"A truce to your sermons, old fool!" cried the host, in a loud, angry tone, "unless you would curse the angel of darkness who has brought us together twice in one day, in the same carriage and under the same roof. Imitate your friend the hermit, who is silent, for he longs to be back again in his cave at Lynrass. I thank you, brother monk, for the blessing which I see you bestow upon the Cursed Tower every morning as you cross the hill; but the fact is that you always seemed tall to me until now, and that black beard of yours looked white. Are you sure that you are the hermit of Lynrass,—the only hermit in the province of Throndhjem?"

"I am the only one," said the hermit in a hollow voice.

"We are, then," rejoined his host, "the two recluses of the district—Hollo, Becky, make haste with that roast lamb, for I am hungry. I was detained at Burlock village by that confounded Dr. Manryll, who would only give me twelve escalins for the corpse. That miserable fellow who keeps the Throndhjem Spladgest gets forty. Ha, Master Periwig, what's the matter with you? Are you going to tumble over? By the way, Becky, have you finished the skeleton of that famous magician, Orgivius the poisoner? It is high time it was delivered to the Bergen Museum. Did you send one of your little pigs to the mayor of Loevig to get what he owes me,—four double crowns for boiling a witch and two alchemists, and

for removing several chains from the cross-beams of his tribunal, which they disfigured ; twenty escalins for hanging Ishmael Typhaine, a Jew against whom the good bishop entered a complaint ; and a crown for putting a new wooden arm to the stone gallows of the tower."

"Your wages," replied his wife in sour tones, "remain in the mayor's hands, because your son forgot to take a wooden spoon to receive the money, and none of the judge's servants were willing to put it into his hand."

The husband frowned.

"Only let their necks fall into my hands, and they shall see whether I need a wooden spoon to touch them. But we must manage the mayor carefully, for it is to him that robber Ivar complained that he was put to the rack by me, and not by a regular executioner, alleging that, as he had not yet been tried, he was not upon my level. By the way, wife, do keep the children from playing with my nippers and pincers ; they have spoiled all my tools, so that I really could not use them to-day. Where are they, the little monsters ?" added the man, going up to the heap of straw where Spiagudry had fancied that he saw three dead bodies. "Here they are in bed ; they sleep through all our noise as soundly as if they had been hanged."

From these words, whose grim horror was in strong contrast with the speaker's mirth and fierce, frightful composure, the reader will have guessed who was the inhabitant of the Vyglá tower. Spiagudry, who upon his first appearance recognized him from having often seen him act in his official capacity in the Thronðhjem market-place, felt ready to faint, particularly when he considered

his own powerful personal motive for dreading this awful personage. He leaned over to Ordener, and said in scarcely articulate tones, "It is Nychol Orugix, the hangman of the province of Throndhjem!"

Ordener, at first struck with horror, shuddered, and regretted both his journey and the storm. But soon a peculiar feeling of curiosity took possession of him, and although he pitied his old guide's distress and terror, he devoted his entire attention to observing the speech and manners of the singular being before him,—just as a man might listen eagerly to the growl of a hyena or the roar of a tiger, brought from the desert to one of our great cities. Poor Benignus was far from being sufficiently easy in his mind to make psychological observations. Hidden behind Ordener, he drew his mantle closely about him, raised a restless hand to his plaster, pulled the back of his loose periwig over his face, and sighed heavily.

Meantime the hostess had dished up the joint of roast lamb, with its reassuring tail, on a large earthen platter. The hangman seated himself opposite Ordener and Spia-gudry, between the two clergymen; and his wife, after putting upon the table a jug of sweetened beer, a piece of *rindebrod*,¹ and five wooden plates, sat down by the fire and busied herself in sharpening her husband's dull tools.

"There, reverend sir," said Orugix, laughing; "the sheep offers you a piece of lamb. And you, Sir Periwig, was it the wind that blew your hair over your face?"

¹ Bark bread, eaten by the poorer classes in Norway.

"The wind, sir, — the storm —" stammered the trembling Spiagudry.

"Come, pluck up a spirit, old boy! You see that these reverend gentlemen and I are good fellows. Tell us who you are, and who your silent young friend is, and talk a bit. If your conversation is as amusing as your person, it must be funny indeed."

"Your worship jests," said the keeper, pursing his lips, showing his teeth and winking, to make himself look merry. "I am but a poor old man."

"Yes," interrupted the jovial hangman, "some old scientist, some old sorcerer."

"Oh, my lord and master, a scientist, but no sorcerer!"

"So much the worse; a sorcerer would complete our joyful Sanhedrim. Gentlemen and guests, let us drink to restore this old sage's speech, so that he may enliven us at supper; the health of the man we hanged to-day, brother preacher! Well, father monk, do you refuse my beer?"

The hermit had, indeed, drawn from under his gown a large gourd of clear water, from which he filled his glass.

"Zounds, hermit of Lynrass!" cried the hangman, "if you will not taste my beer, I will taste the water which you prefer to it."

"So be it," answered the hermit.

"First take off your glove, worthy brother," answered the hangman. "Water should always be poured with the bare hand."

The hermit shook his head, saying, "It is a vow."

"Well, then, pour," said the hangman.

Hardly had Orugix raised the glass to his lips when he set it down hastily, while the hermit drained his at a draught.

"By the Holy Grail! good hermit, what is that infernal stuff? I have not drank its like since the day that I came near drowning in my voyage from Copenhagen to Thronthjem. Truly, hermit, that is no water from Lynrass spring; it is salt water."

"Salt water," repeated Spiagudry, his terror increasing as he looked at the hermit's glove.

"Well, well!" said the hangman, turning toward him with a loud laugh; "so everything alarms you, old Absalom, — even to the drink of a holy monk who chooses to mortify his flesh!"

"Alas! no, master! But salt water — There is but one man —"

"Come, come, you don't know what you are talking about, sir doctor; your distress must be caused by your bad conscience, or else you despise our company."

These words, uttered in a humorous tone, reminded Spiagudry that he must needs hide his fears. To mollify his much-dreaded host, he called his vast memory to his aid, and summoned up all the presence of mind which was left to him.

"I despise you, — you, my lord and master! You, whose presence in a province gives that province the *merum imperium*!¹ You, mighty hangman, the executioner of secular vengeance, the sword of justice, the shield of innocence! You, whom Aristotle in the sixth book and

¹ Blood privilege, the right to have a hangman.

last chapter of his 'Politics' ranks with magistrates, and whose salary Paris de Puteo, in his treatise 'De Syndico,' fixes at five gold crowns, as this passage proves: *Quinque aureos manivolto!* You, sir, whose Cronstadt colleagues were ennobled when they had cut off three hundred heads, — you, whose terrible but most honorable functions are performed with pride in Franconia by the most recent bridegroom, in Reutlingen by the youngest of the city councillors, in Stedien by the last-made citizen! And do I not also know, good master, that your colleagues in France have the right of *havadium* upon every leper, upon pigs, and upon cake on Epiphany eve? How could I fail to feel the deepest respect for you when the abbot of Saint Germain des Prés gives you a boar's head every year, on Saint Vincent's Day, and puts you at the head of his procession!"

Here the keeper's erudite flow of fancy was abruptly cut short by the hangman.

"Upon my word, this is the first that I have heard of it. The learned abbot of whom you speak, my worthy friend, has hitherto defrauded me of all these fine privileges which you describe in such attractive fashion.—Strangers," continued Orugix, "aside from all this old fool's extravagant nonsense, it is quite true that I have missed my career. I am only the poor hangman of a poor province. Well, I certainly ought to have done better than Stillison Dickoy, the famous hangman of Moscow. Would you believe that I am the same man who was chosen twenty-four years ago to behead Schumacker?"

"Schumacker, Count of Griffenfeld!" exclaimed Ordener.

"Does that surprise you, Sir Silent? Yes, that selfsame Schumacker who, strange to say, would again fall into my hands should it please the king to recall his reprieve. Let us empty this jug, gentlemen, and I will tell you how it happens that after so brilliant a beginning I end my career so miserably.

"In 1676, I was assistant to Rhum Stuald, the royal hangman at Copenhagen. At the time of Count Griffenfeld's sentence, my master falling ill, I was, thanks to my powerful patrons, selected to act in his place. On June 5, — I shall never forget that day, — at five o'clock in the morning, assisted by the carpenter, I erected in the public square a huge gallows, which we hung with black, out of respect for the prisoner. At eight, the king's guards surrounded the scaffold, and the Schleswig Uhlans kept back the crowd that thronged the square. Who would not have been dazzled in my place? Erect, and sword in hand, I stood waiting on the platform. All eyes were upon me; at that moment I was the most important personage in the two kingdoms. My fortune, thought I, is made; for what could all these great lords, who have sworn the chancellor's ruin, do without me? I already regarded myself as the royal hangman of the town, by letters-patent; I had servants and privileges of every sort. Just listen! The clock on the fortress struck ten. The prisoner left his cell, crossed the square, and ascended the scaffold with a firm step and calm face. I wanted to tie his hair; he refused, and himself performed this last office. 'It's a long time,' he said smilingly to the prior of St. Andrew's, 'since I dressed my own hair.' I offered him the

black bandage; he declined it scornfully, but without showing any contempt for me. 'My friend,' said he, 'this is perhaps the first time on record, that the space of a few feet ever held the two officers representing the extremes of the law,—the chancellor and the executioner!' Those words have remained graven on my memory. He also refused the black cushion which I would have given him for his knees, embraced the priest, and knelt, after declaring his innocence in a loud voice. Then I broke his escutcheon with a single blow of my mace, crying aloud, as is the custom, 'This is not done without just cause.' This affront shook the count's firm bearing; he turned pale, but soon mastered himself and said, 'The king gave me my arms; the king can take them from me!' He placed his head on the block, turned his eyes toward the east, and I raised my sword in both hands. Now listen! At that instant a shout fell upon my ears, — 'Pardon, in the king's name! Pardon for Schumacker!' I turned; I saw a royal aide-de-camp galloping toward the gallows waving a parchment. The count rose, with a look not of pleasure, but of satisfaction. The parchment was handed to him. 'Good God!' cried he, 'imprisonment for life! Their mercy is more cruel than death.' He stepped, looking like a thief, from the scaffold which he had mounted so serenely. It was nothing to me. I had no idea that this man's salvation meant my ruin. After removing the scaffold, I returned to my master still full of hope, although slightly disappointed at losing the golden crown, my fee for removing a head. That was not all. Next day I received an order to leave the city, and an ap-

pointment as executioner for the province of Throindhjem. A provincial hangman, and that in the most miserable province of Norway! Now you shall see, gentlemen, how small causes sometimes bring about great results. The count's enemies, by way of displaying their generosity, had done all in their power to keep back the pardon until the execution was over. It lacked but one minute; they blamed me for being so slow, as if it would have been decent to prevent an illustrious man from amusing himself for a few moments, before he breathed his last! As if a royal executioner beheading a lord high chancellor could act with no more dignity and sense of proportion than a country hangman turning off a Jew! Ill-will was added to this. I had a brother; indeed, I think I have one still. He had changed his name, and succeeded in finding employment in the house of the new chancellor, Count d'Ahlefeld. My presence in Copenhagen disturbed the scoundrel. My brother despised me, because it might some time fall to my lot to hang him."

Here the fluent narrator stopped to give vent to his mirth; then he went on:—

"You see, my dear guests, that I made the best of it. The deuce take ambition! I ply my calling honestly. I sell my dead bodies, or Becky turns them into skeletons, which the Bergen anatomical museum buys. I laugh at everything, even at that poor woman who was a gypsy, and whom solitude has driven mad. My three heirs are growing up in the fear of the Devil and the gallows. My name is the terror of all the children in Throindhjem. The city council furnish me with a cart

and red clothes. The Cursed Tower protects me from rain as well as the bishop's palace could do. Old priests, driven hither by a storm, preach to me; learned men fawn upon me. In fine, I am as happy as most people; I drink, eat, hang, and sleep."

The hangman did not close this long speech without frequent interludes of beer and noisy bursts of laughter.

"He kills, and he sleeps!" murmured the minister; "poor wretch!"

"What a lucky fellow the rascal is!" exclaimed the hermit.

"Yes, brother monk," said the hangman; "just as much of a rascal as you are, but assuredly much luckier. You see, the business would be a capital one if people did not seem to take pleasure in cutting down my profits. Would you believe it, some great wedding has just afforded the chaplain newly appointed to Throndhjem a pretext for asking the pardon of twelve criminals who really belonged to me!"

"Belonged to you!" cried the minister.

"Yes, to be sure, Father. Seven of them were sentenced to be whipped, two to be branded on the left cheek, and three to be hanged, which makes twelve in all. Yes, I shall lose twelve crowns and thirteen escalins if the pardon is granted. What do you think, strangers, of such a chaplain, who disposes so easily of my property? That confounded priest's name is Athanasius Munder. Oh, if I could only get hold of him!"

The minister rose, and said in a quiet voice, with a calm manner, "My son, I am Athanasius Munder."

At these words Orugix's face became inflamed with fury; he started from his seat. Then his angry eye met the friendly gaze of the chaplain, and he sat down again slowly, in mute confusion.

There was a momentary silence. Ordener, who had risen from the table ready to defend the priest, was first to break it.

"Nychol Orugix," said he, "here are thirteen crowns to pay for the pardon of those prisoners."

"Alas!" interrupted the minister, "who knows whether I can obtain their pardon? I must first manage to get a word with the viceroy's son, for it all depends upon his marrying the chancellor's daughter."

"Sir chaplain," answered the young man in a firm voice, "your wish shall be granted. Even if Ordener Guldenlew never wears the marriage ring, the chains of your *protégés* shall be loosed."

"Young stranger, you can do nothing in the matter; but God hears, and will reward you!"

Meantime, Ordener's thirteen crowns had finished the work which the priest's mild gaze began. Nychol's anger being allayed, he recovered his good-humor.

"Come, reverend sir, you are a good man, worthy to serve in St. Hilary's chapel; I spoke more harshly than I intended. You do but follow your own path; it is not your fault if it crosses mine. But there is one man to whom I do bear a grudge, and that's the guardian of the dead at Throndhjem, — that old sorcerer, the keeper of the Spladgest. What's his name now, — Spliugry? Spadugry? Tell me, you old philosopher, who seem to be a perfect

Babel of learning,—you who know everything, can't you help me to remember the name of that magician, your brother? You must have met him sometimes of a Sabbath, riding through the air on a broomstick, eh?"

Certainly, if poor Benignus could have escaped at that moment upon some such aerial steed, the narrator of this story doubts not that he would most gladly have trusted his frail and terrified body to its tender mercies. Never before was his love of life so strong as now that he clearly perceived the extreme imminence of his danger. Everything that he saw frightened him,—the legends of the Cursed Tower, the wild eyes of the red woman, the voice, gloves, and beverage of the mysterious monk, the rash courage of his young companion, and especially the hangman,—the hangman, into whose abode he had fallen in his effort to escape from the charge of crime. He trembled so violently that he could scarcely move, particularly when the conversation turned upon himself, and he heard the dreadful Orugix's question. As he had no desire to imitate the heroism of the priest, his faltering tongue found great difficulty in framing a reply.

"Well!" repeated the hangman, "don't you know the name of the keeper of the Spladgest? Does your wig make you deaf?"

"Somewhat, sir; but," he finally stammered out, "I don't know his name, I swear I don't."

"He don't know?" said the hermit's terrible voice. "He does wrong to take oath to it. That man's name is Benignus Spiagudry."

"My name! my name! Great heavens!" exclaimed the affrighted old man.

The hangman burst out laughing.

"And who said that it was your name? We are talking of that dog of a keeper. In good sooth, this learned fellow is scared at nothing. How would it be if his ridiculous grimaces had a genuine cause? It would be fun to hang the old fool. So then, venerable doctor," added the hangman, whom Spiagudry's fears entertained, "you do not know this Benignus Spiagudry?"

"No, master," said the keeper, somewhat reassured by his disguise; "I assure you I don't know him. And since he is so unfortunate as to displease you, I should be very sorry, master, indeed I should, if I did know the fellow."

"And you, hermit," said Orugix, — "you seem to know him?"

"Yes, truly," replied the hermit; "he is a tall, dried-up, bald old fellow —"

Spiagudry, justly alarmed at this minute description, hastily adjusted his wig.

"He has," added the hermit, "long hands like those of a thief who has not seen a traveller for a week, a bent back —"

Spiagudry sat up as straight as he could.

"Moreover, he might easily be taken for one of the corpses in his charge if he had not such sharp eyes."

Spiagudry clapped his hand to his plaster.

"Many thanks, Father," said the hangman; "I shall know the old Jew now, wherever I may run across him."

Spiagudry, who was an excellent Christian, indignant at this intolerable insult, could not help exclaiming, "Jew, master!"

Then he stopped short, trembling lest he had said too much.

"Well, Jew or Pagan, what does it matter which, if he have dealings with the Devil, as they say he has?"

"I should readily believe it," rejoined the hermit, with a sarcastic smile, not quite hidden by his cowl, "if he were not such a coward. But how could he covenant with Satan? He is as cowardly as he is wicked. When fear takes possession of him, he actually forgets his own identity."

The hermit spoke slowly, as if with intention, the very deliberation of his words lending them peculiar force.

"He forgets his own identity!" mentally repeated Spiagudry.

"It's a pity for a bad man to be a coward," said the hangman; "for he's not worth hating. We fight a serpent, but we can only crush a lizard."

Spiagudry ventured a few words in his own defence.

"But, gentlemen, are you sure that the official of whom you speak is really what you say? Is his reputation so bad?"

"His reputation!" repeated the hermit; "he has the worst reputation of any man in the district!"

Benignus, in his disappointment, turned to the hangman.

"Master, what fault have you to find with him? For I do not doubt that your dislike is just."

"You are right, old man, not to doubt it. As his trade

resembles mine, Spiagudry does all he can to injure me."

"Oh, master, never believe it! Or, if it be so, it is because he never saw you, as I have, surrounded by your good wife and lovely children, admitting strangers to the delights of your domestic circle. Had he enjoyed your kind hospitality as I have, sir, the unfortunate man could never be your enemy."

Spiagudry had scarcely ended this wily speech, when the tall woman, who had been silent until then, rose, and said in a sharp, stern voice, "The viper's tongue is never more venomous than when it is smeared with honey." Then she sat down again, and went on polishing her pincers, — a task whose hoarse, grating sound, filling up the spaces in the conversation, performed the office of the chorus in a Greek tragedy, at the expense of the ears of the four travellers.

"That woman is crazy indeed!" thought the keeper, unable otherwise to explain the ill effect of his flattery.

"Becky is right, my fair-haired sage," exclaimed the hangman. "I shall think you have a viper's tongue, if you defend that Spiagudry much longer."

"God forbid, master!" exclaimed the latter; "I would not defend him for the world."

"Very good. You do not know how far he carries his insolence. Would you believe that the impudent scamp is bold enough to dispute my right to the possession of Hans of Iceland?"

"Hans of Iceland!" exclaimed the hermit.

"Yes, to be sure. Do you know that famous knave?"

"Yes," said the hermit.

"Well, every thief belongs to the hangman, does n't he? What does that infernal Spiagudry do? He asks to have a price set upon the head of Hans."

"He asks to have a price set upon the head of Hans?" interrupted the hermit.

"He had the audacity to do so, and that, simply that the body might fall to his share, and I might be defrauded of my property."

"What an outrage, Master Orugix, to dare to dispute your right to a thing which so plainly belongs to you!"

These words were accompanied by a malicious smile, which alarmed Spiagudry.

"The trick is all the worse, hermit, because I only need one good hanging, such as that of Hans would be, to remove me from my obscurity, and to make the fortune which I failed to make by beheading Schumacker."

"Indeed, Master Nychol?"

"Yes, brother monk, on the day that Hans is arrested, come and see me, and we will sacrifice a fat pig to my future greatness."

"Gladly; but who knows whether I shall be at liberty upon that day? Besides, you just now sent ambition to the Devil."

"Oh, why not, Father, when I see that to destroy my best founded hopes it only needs a Spiagudry, and a request to set a price upon a man's head?"

"Ah!" repeated the hermit, in a peculiar tone; "so Spiagudry asked that a price be set!"

That voice was to the wretched keeper what the toad's eye is to a bird.

"Gentlemen," he urged, "why judge rashly? It is not at all sure; it may be a false report."

"A false report!" cried Orugix; "the thing is but too certain. The petition of the city council, supported by the signature of the keeper of the Spladgest, is in Throndhjem at this very moment. It only waits the decision of his excellency the governor-general."

The hangman was so well informed, that Spiagudry dared not continue his defence; he contented himself with swearing inwardly, for the hundredth time, at his youthful companion. But what was his horror when he heard the hermit, who for some moments had seemed lost in thought, suddenly exclaim in bantering tones: "Master Nychol, what is the penalty for sacrilege?"

These words produced the same effect on Spiagudry as if his periwig and plaster had been torn off. He anxiously awaited the reply of Orugix, who stopped to empty his glass.

"That depends on the nature of the sacrilege," said the hangman.

"Suppose it was profaning the dead?"

Upon this the shivering Spiagudry expected every instant to hear his name issue from the lips of the unaccountable monk.

"Formerly," coolly remarked Orugix, "they buried the offender alive, with the body he had outraged."

"And now?"

"Now the punishment is milder."

"Is milder!" said Spiagudry, scarcely daring to breathe.

"Yes," rejoined the hangman, with the satisfied and indifferent air of an artist talking of his own art; "they brand him first, with a hot iron, with the letter S, on the calf of the leg."

"And then?" broke in the old keeper, upon whom it would have been difficult to inflict this part of the sentence.

"Then," said the executioner, "they merely hang him."

"Mercy!" said Spiagudry; "hang him!"

"Well, what's the matter with you? You look at me as the victim looks at the gallows."

"I am glad," said the hermit, "to see that people are growing more humane."

At this moment, the storm having ceased, the clear, intermittent sound of a horn was distinctly heard outside.

"Nychol," said his wife, "they are in search of some malefactor; that's the horn of the bowmen."

"The horn of the bowmen!" repeated each of the company, in different accents, but Spiagudry in tones of unmistakable terror.

They had scarcely uttered the words when there was a knock at the door.



XIII.

Only a man, a sign, is needed; the elements of revolution are ready. Who will be the first? So soon as there is a fulcrum, everything will move. — BONAPARTE.

LOEVIG is a large town, situated on the north side of Thronhjelm fjord, and sheltered by a low chain of bare hills, singularly diversified by various sorts of crops, like broad bits of mosaic resting upon the horizon. The appearance of the town is gloomy; the fishermen's cabins, made of twigs and reeds, the conical hut, constructed of earth and stones, in which the invalid miner spends the few days which his scanty savings allow him to devote to sunshine and rest, and the frail ruin which the chamois-hunter in his turn decks with a straw roof and walls hung with skins, line streets longer than the town itself, because they are narrow and crooked. In a square where now

exist only the remains of a great tower, once stood the ancient fortress built by Horda the Fine Archer, lord of Loevig, and brother-in-arms of the pagan king Halfdan, occupied in 1698 by the mayor of the town, who would have been the best-lodged citizen in the city, if it had not been for the silvery stork who every summer perched on the tip of the sharp spire of the church, like the white pearl on the top of a mandarin's pointed cap.

On the morning of the same day that Ordener reached Throndbjem, another personage, also incognito, landed at Loevig. His gilded litter, although without armorial bearings, his four tall lackeys, armed to the teeth, instantly became the topic of every conversation, and roused the curiosity of all. The landlord of the Golden Gull, a small tavern at which the great man alighted, himself assumed an air of mystery, and answered every question with an "I don't know," which seemed to imply, "I know all, but you shall know nothing." The tall lackeys were as mute as fishes, and more obscure than the mouth of a mine.

The mayor shut himself up in his tower, waiting with great dignity for the stranger to make the first visit; but the inhabitants were soon surprised to see him call twice at the Golden Gull in vain, and at evening lie in wait for a bow from the stranger, as he sat at the half-open window. From this the gossips inferred that the great man had made his high rank known to the lord mayor. They were mistaken. A messenger sent by the stranger presented himself at the mayor's office to get his passport signed, and the mayor noticed upon the green seal

two crossed hands supporting an ermine mantle, surmounted by a count's coronet upon a shield, from which depended the collars of the Orders of the Elephant and the Dannebrog. This was enough for the mayor, who was most desirous of obtaining from the chancellor the lord mayoralty of Thronthjem. But his advances were useless, for the great man would see no one.

The second day of the traveller's stay in Loevig was drawing to its close, when the landlord entered his room, saying with a low bow that the messenger expected by his Grace had arrived.

"Very well," said his Grace; "let him come up."

A moment later the messenger entered, carefully closed the door, then bowing to the ground before the stranger, who had half turned toward him, waited in respectful silence until he should be addressed.

"I expected you this morning," said the stranger; "what detained you?"

"The interests of your Grace, Count; have I another thought?"

"How is Elphega? How is Frederic?"

"They are well."

"Good! good!" broke in the master; "have you nothing more interesting to tell me? What is the news at Thronthjem?"

"Nothing, except that Baron Thorwick arrived there yesterday."

"Yes, I know that he wanted to consult that old Mecklenburger, Levin, about his marriage. Do you know the result of his interview with the governor?"

"To-day at noon, when I left, he had not yet seen the general."

"What! and he arrived last night! You surprise me, Musdæmon. And had he seen the countess?"

"Still less, sir."

"Then you saw him?"

"No, noble master; besides, I do not know him."

"And how, if no one has seen him, do you know that he is in Thronðhjem?"

"Through his servant, who was at the governor's palace yesterday."

"But he, — did he go elsewhere?"

"His servant declares that as soon as he arrived, he set off for Munkholm, after first visiting the Spladgest."

The count's eye flashed fire.

"For Munkholm! For Schumacker's prison! Are you positive? I always suspected that honest Levin of being a traitor. For Munkholm! What can be the attraction there? Did he want to ask Schumacker's advice also? Did he —"

"Noble lord," interrupted Musdæmon, "it is by no means certain that he went there."

"What! Then why did you say so? Are you trifling with me?"

"Pardon me, your Grace! I merely repeated what the baron's servant said. But Mr. Frederic, who was on duty yesterday at Munkholm, saw nothing of Baron Ordener."

"That's no proof! My son does not know the vice-roy's son. Ordener may have entered the fortress in disguise."

"Yes, sir; but Mr. Frederic asserts that he saw no one."

The count grew calmer.

"That's a different matter. Did my son really say so?"

"He assured me of the fact three separate times; and Mr. Frederic's interests in this case are identical with your own."

This suggestion quite relieved the count.

"Ah!" said he, "I understand. The baron, on his arrival, must have wished to take a short sail on the fjord, and his servant fancied that he went to Munkholm. After all, why should he go there? I was foolish to take alarm. My son-in-law's lack of eagerness to see old Levin proves, on the contrary, that his affection for him is not so strong as I feared. You will hardly believe it, my dear Musdoemon," added the count, "but I actually imagined that Ordener was in love with Ethel Schumacker, and I constructed a romance and an intrigue out of this journey to Munkholm. But, thank God, Ordener is not such a fool as I am. By the way, my friend, how fares it with that young Danaë in Frederic's hands?"

Musdoemon had shared his master's fears regarding Ethel Schumacker, and had struggled against them without overcoming them quite so readily. However, charmed to see his master smile, he took care not to disturb his peace of mind, but rather sought to add to it, that he might increase that serene temper so necessary in the great for the well-being of their favorites.

"Noble Count, your son has failed with Schumacker's

daughter; but it seems that another has been more fortunate."

The count interrupted him eagerly.

"Another! What other?"

"Oh, I don't know, — some peasant, serf, or vassal."

"Do you speak the truth?" cried the count, his stern, dark face beaming.

"Mr. Frederic declares that it is so, and he told the countess the same story."

The count rose and paced the room, rubbing his hands.

"Muscæmon, dear Muscæmon, but one more effort, and our end is gained. The young shoot is blasted. We have only to uproot the parent tree. Have you any other good news?"

"Dispolsen has been murdered."

The count's features brightened.

"Ah, you see that we advance from victory to victory. Have we his papers? Above all, have we that iron casket?"

"I regret to inform your Grace that the murder was not committed by our people. He was killed and robbed upon Urechtal Sands, and the deed is attributed to Hans of Iceland."

"Hans of Iceland!" repeated his master, his brow again clouding. "What! that famous brigand whom we meant to put in charge of our rebellion?"

"The same, noble Count; and I fear, from what I can gather, that it will be no easy task to find him. At any rate, I have secured a leader who will take his name, and can replace him if necessary, — a wild mountaineer, tall

and strong as an oak, fierce and bold as a wolf in a wilderness of snow, this terrible giant must surely look much like the real Hans of Iceland."

"Then Hans of Iceland is tall?" inquired the count.

"That is the general opinion, your Grace."

"I cannot but admire, my dear Musdæmon, the art with which you lay your plans. When is the insurrection to break out?"

"Oh, very soon, your Grace; perhaps it is on foot even now. The royal protectorate has long been odious to the miners; they all grasped with joy at the idea of revolt. The movement will begin at Guldbrandsdal, extend to Sund-Moer, and reach Kongsberg. Two thousand miners can be raised in three days. The rebellion will be kindled in Schumacker's name; our emissaries use no other. The reserve forces in the South and the garrisons at Throndhjem and Skongen can be called out, and you will be here on the spot most opportunely to put down the rebellion,—a fresh and significant service in the eyes of the king,—and to rid him of this Schumacker, the source of such anxiety to the throne. Upon these firm foundations will rise the structure to be crowned by the marriage of our noble lady Ulrica and Baron Thorwick."

A private interview between two scoundrels is never long, because all that is human in their souls quickly takes alarm at the infernal qualities revealed. When two depraved spirits mutually display their naked vices, each is disgusted by the other's iniquity. Crime itself revolts at crime; and two evil-doers conversing, with all the cyni-

cism of intimacy, of their pleasures and their interests, are like a fearful mirror, each reflecting the other's monstrous features. Their own degradation mortifies them when seen in another, their own pride confounds them, their own nothingness alarms them; and they cannot fly from themselves or disavow their own portrait in their fellow-man; for each odious harmony, each frightful coincidence, each hideous parallel finds within them an untiring voice to denounce them in their ever-wearied ear. However secret may be their intercourse, it has always two intolerable witnesses, — God, whom they cannot see, and conscience, which they feel.

His confidential talks with Musdæmon distressed the count the more because the latter always unhesitatingly imputed to his master a good share of the crimes committed or about to be committed. Many courtiers think it wise to save great men from the appearance of wrongdoing; they assume the responsibility of evil, and often spare their patron's blushes by allowing him to feign resistance to advantageous crime. Musdæmon, by a refinement of skill, pursued the contrary course. He wished it to seem that he seldom advised, and always obeyed. He knew his master's soul as familiarly as that master knew his heart; therefore he never compromised himself without compromising the count. There was no head, save that of Schumacker, that the count would have been so glad to see fall; Musdæmon knew this as well as if his master had told him, and his master knew that he knew it.

The count had learned all that he wished to learn; he was satisfied; he was now eager to dismiss Musdæmon.

"Muscæmon," said he, with a gracious smile, "you are the most faithful and most zealous of all my servants. All goes well, and I owe it to your devotion. I make you private secretary to the chancellor's office."

Muscæmon bowed low.

"Nor is that all," added the count; "I will ask for you, for the third time, the Order of the Dannebrog. But I still fear that your birth, your humble relations —"

Muscæmon blushed, turned pale, and hid his change of color by another bow.

"Come," said the count, offering him his hand to kiss, "come, Mr. Private Secretary, draw up your *placeat*! It may chance to find the king in gracious mood."

"Whether his Majesty grant my petition or not, your Grace's kindness overwhelms me."

"Make haste, my dear fellow, for I am anxious to be off. We must try to get some exact information about this Hans."

Muscæmon, with a third bow, opened the door.

"Ah!" said the count, "I forgot. In your new position as private secretary, you may write to the chancellor's office and order them to dismiss this mayor of Loevig, who compromises the dignity of his position in the eyes of the villagers by his servility to strangers whom he does not know."



XIV.

The monk at midnight visiting the cross,
The knight taming his fiery steed,
The man who with dread sound of trumpet dies,
And he who dies with peaceful voice of prayer,
Are all the objects of Thy care, lavished alike
On every pious soul, whether he tonsure wear or helm.

Hymn to Saint Anselm.

“YES, master, we really owe a pilgrimage to Lyrass grotto. Who would have thought that the hermit, whom I cursed as if he had been the Devil, would prove to be our guardian angel, and that the sword which seemed to threaten our very lives would serve for a bridge to take us over the abyss !”

It was in these somewhat grotesquely figurative terms that Benignus Spiagudry poured into Ordener's ears his joy, his admiration, and his gratitude for the mysterious

monk. As will readily be supposed, our two travellers had left the Cursed Tower ; nay, when we again encounter them, they have even left the village of Vyglá far behind them, and are painfully pursuing a steep path, interrupted by frequent pools or blocked by huge stones, which transient torrents caused by storms had washed down from the wet, sticky soil. Day had not yet dawned ; but the bushes growing above the rocks on either side of the road stood out against the clear sky like dark silhouettes, and various objects, although still colorless, gradually assumed form in the dim, dull light which daybreak in the North filters through the chill fogs of early morning.

Ordener was silent, for he had yielded to that somnolent state sometimes permitted by the mechanical motion of walking. He had not slept since the night before, when he allowed himself to rest in a fishing-boat moored in Throndhjem harbor for the few hours intervening between his departure from the Spladgest and his arrival at Munkholm. Accordingly, while his body moved toward Skongen his spirit had flown back to Throndhjem Fjord, — to that gloomy prison and those melancholy towers which contained the only being on earth to whom he attached any idea of hope and happiness.

Awake, thoughts of his Ethel filled his mind ; asleep, her memory became a fanciful image which irradiated all his dreams. In this second life of sleep, where for a time the soul alone exists, and the physical being with all its material ills seems to disappear, he saw the beloved maiden, no more beautiful, no purer, than in reality, but happier, freer, more wholly his own. Only, upon the road

to Skongen, the oblivion of his body, the torpor of his senses, could not be complete; for from time to time a bog, a stone, the branch of a tree, impeding his progress, recalled him suddenly from the ideal to the real. He would then raise his head, half open his drowsy eyes, and regret the fall from bright celestial wanderings to his painful earthly journey, where nothing could compensate for his lost illusions, save that he felt close to his heart the ringlet which was his until Ethel herself should be his own. Then this memory revived the charming dream-image, and he gently relapsed, not into slumber, but into a vague, persistent reverie.

"Master," repeated Spiagudry, in a louder tone, which, combined with a blow from the trunk of a tree, aroused Ordener, "fear nothing. The bowmen turned to the right with the hermit when they left the tower, and we are far enough away from them to venture to speak. It is true that silence was most prudent until now."

"Indeed," said Ordener, yawning, "you push your prudence to extremes. It is at least three hours since we left the tower and the bowmen behind us."

"That is true, sir; but prudence never does any harm. Only think, if I had declared myself when the chief of that infernal troop asked for Benignus Spiagudry in a voice like that of Saturn calling for his new-born son that he might devour him! Suppose, even, I had not taken refuge in a prudent silence at that awful moment, where should I be now, noble master?"

"Faith, old man, I fancy that at that moment nothing, not even pincers, could have drawn your name from you."

“Was I wrong, master? If I had spoken, the monk, — may Saint Hospitius, and Saint Usbald the Solitary, bless him! — the monk would have had no opportunity to ask the captain of the archers whether his men did not belong to the Munkholm regiment; a trifling question, merely asked in order to gain time. Did you notice, sir, after that stupid archer answered ‘Yes,’ with what a peculiar smile the monk requested him to follow him, saying that he knew the hiding-place of the fugitive, Benignus Spiagudry?”

Here the keeper paused for a moment, as if to make a fresh start; for he suddenly resumed, in a voice quivering with emotion: “A good priest, a worthy and upright anchorite, practising the principles of Christian virtue and evangelic charity; and I was alarmed at his mere outward appearance, forbidding enough, truly; but what a beautiful soul lies beneath! Did you notice too, noble master, that there was something peculiar in the tone with which he said to me, ‘We shall meet again!’ as he led away the archers? At any other time that tone would have alarmed me; but it is not the pious and excellent hermit’s fault. Solitude undoubtedly gives that strange intonation; for I know, sir,” — here the voice of Benignus sank lower, — “I know another hermit, that dreadful fellow who — But no; out of respect for the venerable hermit of Lynrass I will not make so odious a comparison. Neither was there anything peculiar about his gloves; it is quite cold enough to wear them; and his salty beverage does not surprise me either. Catholic anchorites often follow singular examples; the very same thing, master, is alluded to

in this line by the famous Urensius, the monk of Mount Caucasus: —

‘Rivos despiciens, maris undam potat amaram.’

Why did n't I think of that verse while I was in that confounded ruin at Vyglá? A little better memory would have spared me much needless alarm. To be sure, it is not easy, is it, sir, to collect your thoughts in such a den, seated at the table of a hangman, — a hangman, a creature given over to universal scorn and execration, who only differs from an assassin in the frequency and impunity of his murders; whose heart to all the atrocity of the most awful brigands unites the cowardice of which at least their daring crimes do not admit; a being who offers food and drink with the same hand that wields the instruments of torture, and crushes the bones of his miserable victims between the planks of the rack! Think of breathing the same air with a hangman! And the vilest beggar, if polluted by his loathsome touch, would cast aside with horror the last rags which protected his nakedness and his disease from the wintry blast! And the chancellor, after sealing his commission, flings the paper under the table in token of his malediction and his disgust! And in France, when the hangman dies in his turn, the provost's assistants would rather pay a fine of forty pounds than succeed him! And at Pesth, when Churchill was condemned to die, and they offered to pardon him if he would turn executioner, he preferred death to such a trade. Is it not still notorious, noble sir, that Turmeryn, bishop of Mäestricht, ordered a church to be

purified because the hangman had entered it; and that Czarina Petrowna washed her face whenever she witnessed an execution? You know also that the kings of France, to honor warriors, permit them to be punished by their comrades, so that these brave men, even if they be criminals, may not be made infamous by contact with the hangman. And finally, which is decisive, in the 'Descent of Saint George into Hell,' by the learned Melasius Iturham, does not Charon give the robber, Robin Hood, precedence over the hangman, Philip Crass? Truly, master, if ever I attain to power, which God alone can foresee, I shall put down hangmen, and restore the ancient custom and the ancient tariff. For the murder of a prince a man shall pay, as in 1150, fourteen hundred and forty double-crown pieces; for the murder of a count, fourteen hundred and forty plain crowns; for that of a baron, fourteen hundred and forty half-crowns; the killing of a mere noble shall be rated at fourteen hundred and forty escalins; and that of a citizen —"

"Don't I hear the tread of a horse coming toward us?" interrupted Ordener.

They looked back, and, as day had dawned during Spigudry's long soliloquy, they could distinguish, a hundred paces behind them, a man dressed in black waving one hand to them, and with the other urging on one of those small dingy white ponies so often seen, either wild or domesticated, in the lower mountain ranges of Norway.

"For mercy's sake, master," said the timid keeper, "let us hasten; that black fellow looks to me just like an archer!"

"What, old man; we are two, and we should fly before a single man!"

"Alas! twenty sparrows fly before an owl. What glory is there in waiting for an officer of the law?"

"And who tells you that this is one?" rejoined Ordener, whose eyes were not blinded by fear. "Keep up your courage, my valiant guide; I recognize this traveller. Let us wait for him."

The keeper was forced to submit. A moment later the horseman came up with them, and Spiagudry ceased to tremble when he saw the grave, calm face of the chaplain, Athanasius Munder.

The latter greeted them with a smile, and reined in his steed, saying in an almost breathless voice, "My dear children, it is for your sake that I retrace my steps; and the Lord will surely not permit my absence, prolonged with a charitable intent, to injure those who sorely need my presence."

"Sir minister," answered Ordener, "we shall be happy to aid you in any way we can."

"On the contrary, it is I, noble young man, who desire to serve you. Will you deign to tell me the object of your journey?"

"Reverend sir, I cannot."

"All I ask, my son, is that your refusal may proceed from inability, and not from distrust. If not, I am indeed unhappy! Unhappy is he whom the good man distrusts, even if he have seen him but once!"

The priest's modesty and unction touched Ordener deeply.

"All that I can tell you, Father, is that we are bound to the mountains of the North."

"So I thought, my son, and that is why I followed you. There are bands of roving hunters and miners in those mountains who might injure travellers."

"What then?"

"Well, I know that it is useless to dissuade a noble young man in search of adventure; but the esteem I feel for you inspires me with another plan for helping you. The unfortunate counterfeiter to whom I bore the last consolations of religion yesterday was a miner. Just before he died he gave me a paper inscribed with his name, saying that this passport would protect me from all danger if I ever had to travel among those mountains. Alas! what can it avail a poor priest who must live and die among prisoners, and who, moreover, *inter castra latronum*, should seek no other defence than patience and prayer, the only weapons of God! I did not decline the pass, because we should never distress by refusal the heart of one who in a few minutes more will have nothing to receive or to give on earth. The good God deigned to inspire me, for now I can offer you this parchment, that it may go with you in all the perils of your journey, and that the gift of the dying man may benefit the traveller."

Orderer accepted the old priest's gift with emotion.

"Sir Chaplain," said he, "God grant that your prayer may be heard! Thank you. But," he added, laying his hand on his sword, "I already carry my passport at my side."

"Young man," said the priest, "that poor parchment

may perhaps protect you better than your steel blade. The gaze of a penitent man is more potent than the archangel's sword. Farewell! My prisoners await me. Pray sometimes for them and me."

"Holy priest," rejoined Ordener, with a smile, "I told you that your prisoners should be pardoned, and they shall be."

"Oh, do not speak with such assurance, my son! Do not tempt the Lord! No man can know what passes in the mind of another, and you cannot tell what the vice-roy's son may decide to do. Perhaps, alas! he will never condescend to admit a humble chaplain to his presence. Farewell, my son; may your journey be blessed, and may you sometimes remember the poor priest and pray for his unhappy prisoners."



XV.

Welcome, Hugo; tell me, did you ever see so terrible a storm?—
MATURIN : *Bertram.*

IN a room communicating with the apartments of the Governor of Thronthjem, three of his Excellency's secretaries sat at a table loaded with parchments, papers, inkstands, and seals, a fourth chair, left vacant, showing that one of the scribes was late. They had been silently writing and thinking for some time, when one of them exclaimed: "Did you know, Wapherney, that the poor librarian, Foxtipp, is to be dismissed by the bishop, owing to the letter which you wrote recommending Dr. Anglyvius's petition to his favorable notice?"

"What nonsense are you talking, Richard?" hastily inquired the secretary to whom Richard had not spoken. "Wapherney could not have written in favor of Anglyvius,

for the fellow's petition disgusted the general when I read it to him."

"So you told me," answered Wapherney; "but I found the word *tribuatur*¹ written on the petition in his Excellency's own hand."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the other.

"Yes, my dear fellow; and several other of his Excellency's decisions of which you told me, were also altered in marginal notes. For instance, on the petition of the miners, the general wrote, *negetur*."

"What! I can't understand that; the general dreaded the turbulent spirit of those miners."

"Perhaps he wanted to frighten them into submission by his severity. What makes me think so is that Chaplain Munder's request for the pardon of twelve condemned prisoners is also refused."

The secretary whom Wapherney addressed, rose abruptly, saying, "Oh, come now, I can't believe that; the governor is too kind, and expressed too much compassion for those prisoners to —"

"Very well, Arthur," answered Wapherney; "read it for yourself."

Arthur took the petition and saw the fatal words.

"Really," said he, "I can scarcely credit my own eyes. I must present this to the governor again. What day did his Excellency mark these papers?"

"I believe it was some three days ago," replied Wapherney.

"That was," said Richard in a low voice, "the morning

¹ It is granted.

before Baron Ordener's brief appearance and mysteriously sudden disappearance."

"Stay!" quickly exclaimed Wapherney, before Arthur had time to answer; "if here is not another *tribuatur* on Benignus Spiagudry's ridiculous petition!"

Richard burst out laughing.

"Didn't that old keeper of corpses disappear in a strange way, too?"

"Yes," replied Arthur; "a body was found in his charnel-house so mutilated that the officers of the law are in pursuit of him on a charge of sacrilege. But a little Lapp, who acted as his servant, and who was left alone at the Spladgest, thinks, as do most people, that the Devil carried him off for a sorcerer."

"Here," said Wapherney, laughing, "is a fellow who leaves a good reputation behind him!"

He had hardly had his laugh out when the fourth secretary came in.

"Upon my honor, Gustavus, you are very late this morning. Did you happen to get married yesterday?"

"Oh, no!" answered Wapherney; "he only took the longest way round, so that he might pass under the fair Rosalie's windows in his new cloak."

"Wapherney," said the new-comer, "I only wish that you were right. But the cause of my delay is not half so agreeable; and I doubt if my new cloak produced the slightest effect upon the persons whom I visited."

"Where have you been, then?" asked Arthur.

"To the Spladgest."

"Heaven is my witness," cried Wapherney, dropping

his pen, "that we were just now speaking of that place! But though it may be talked of to pass away the time, I cannot conceive how anybody can enter it."

"And still less," said Richard, "how anybody can linger there. But what did you see, my dear Gustavus?"

"Yes," said Gustavus, "you are curious to hear about it, if not to see it; and it would serve you right if I refused to describe those horrors which you would shudder to behold."

The three secretaries crowded about Gustavus, who waited to be urged, although his desire to tell what he had seen was secretly no less lively than their curiosity to hear.

"Well, Waptherney, you can repeat my story to your little sister, who is so fond of frightful tales. I was pushed into the Spladgest by the crowd which thronged about it. The bodies of three soldiers and two bowmen from the Munkholm regiment had just been brought in, having been found yesterday some four miles away, in the ravine at the foot of Cascadthymore cliff. Some of the spectators declared that the poor fellows were the very ones sent out three days ago in the direction of Skongen to catch the runaway keeper of the Spladgest. If this be true, it is impossible to imagine how so many well-armed men could be murdered. The mutilation of the bodies seems to prove that they were flung from the top of the rocks. It made my hair stand on end to look at them."

"What, Gustavus! did you see them?" eagerly inquired Waptherney.

"They are still before my eyes."

"And has any one an idea as to the authors of the crime?"

"Some think that it may have been a band of miners, and assert that they heard the sound of the horn with which the soldiers call to one another, only yesterday among the mountains."

"Really!" said Arthur.

"Yes; but an old peasant demolished this supposition by remarking that there were neither mines nor miners in the neighborhood of Cascadthymore."

"Then who could it have been?"

"No one knows. If the bodies were not intact, it might be supposed the work of wild beasts, for their limbs are covered with long, deep scratches. The same is the case with the corpse of a white-bearded old man brought into the Spladgest day before yesterday, after that fearful storm which prevented you, my dear Leander Wapherney, from visiting your Hero across the fjord, on the Larsynn shore."

"All right, Gustavus," said Wapherney, laughing. "But who was this old man?"

"From his height, his long white beard, and a rosary still clasped tightly in his hands, although he had been stripped of everything else, he was recognized as a hermit of the neighborhood; I believe they called him the Monk of Lynrass. It is evident that this poor man was murdered also; but for what purpose? People are not slaughtered now for their religious opinions, and the old hermit possessed nothing in the world but his serge gown and the good-will of all who knew him."

"And you say," observed Richard, "that his body was mangled, like those of the soldiers, as if by the claws of some savage animal?"

"Yes, my dear boy; and a fisherman declares that he noticed the same marks upon the body of an officer found murdered a few days since upon Urchtal Sands."

"That is strange," said Arthur.

"It is frightful," said Richard.

"Come," said Waptherney, "silence, and to work, for I think the general will be here soon. My dear Gustavus, I am curious to see those corpses. If you like, we will stop a moment at the Spladgest when we leave here this evening."

XVI.

She with young unawakened senses,
Within her cabin on the Alpine field
Her simple homely life commences,
Her little world therein concealed.
And I, God's hate flung o'er me,
Had not enough, to thrust
The stubborn rocks before me
And strike them into dust !
She and her peace I yet must undermine :
Thou, Hell, hast claimed this sacrifice as thine !

GOETHE : *Faust*, Bayard Taylor's *Translation*.

IN 1675, twenty-four years previous to the date of this story, sooth to say, the whole village of Thoctree rejoiced and made merry over the marriage of sweet Lucy Pelyrhn and that tall, handsome, upright youth, Carroll Stadt. They had long been lovers, and every one felt a warm interest in the happy pair upon the day which was to change so many restless hopes and eager longings into assured and quiet bliss. Born in the same village, reared in the same fields, Carroll had often in their childhood slept in Lucy's lap when tired of play ; Lucy had often, as a young girl, leaned on Carroll's arm as she returned from work. Lucy was the loveliest and most modest maiden in the land ; Carroll the bravest and noblest lad in the village. They loved each other, and they could no more

remember the day when their love began than they could recall the day when they were born.

But their marriage did not come, like their love, easily and as a matter of course. There were domestic interests to be consulted,—family feuds, relations, obstacles. They were parted for a whole year; and Carroll suffered sadly far from Lucy, and Lucy wept bitter tears far from Carroll, before the dawn of that happy day which united them, thereafter never to suffer or to weep apart.

It was by saving her from great danger that Carroll finally won his Lucy. He heard cries from the woods one day; they were uttered by his Lucy, surprised by a brigand dreaded by all the mountain folk, and on the point of carrying her off to his den. Carroll boldly attacked this monster in human shape, who gave vent to strange growls like those of a wild beast. Yes, he attacked the wretch, whom none before had ventured to resist. Love lent him a lion's strength. He rescued his beloved Lucy, restored her to her father, and her father gave her to her deliverer.

Now, the whole village made merry upon the day which united these two lovers. Lucy alone seemed depressed; and yet never had she gazed more tenderly at her dear Carroll. But her gaze was as sad as it was loving, and amid the universal rejoicing this was a subject for surprise. Every moment, as her husband's happiness seemed to increase, her eyes expressed more and more love and despair.

"Oh, my Lucy," said Carroll, when the sacred rites were over, "the coming of that robber, a curse to the entire country, was the greatest blessing for me!"

She shook her head, and made no answer.

Night came ; they were left alone in their new abode, and the sports and dancing on the village green went on more merrily than before, to celebrate the happiness of the bridal pair.

Next morning Carroll Stadt had vanished. A few words in his handwriting were brought to Lucy's father by a hunter from the mountains of Kiölen, who met him before daylight wandering along the shore of the fjord.

Old Will Pelryhn showed the paper to his pastor and the mayor, and nothing was left of last night's festival but Lucy's gloom and dull despair.

This mysterious catastrophe dismayed the entire village, and vain efforts were made to explain it. Prayers for Carroll's soul were said in the same church where but a few days before he himself sang hymns of thanksgiving for his happiness.

No one knew what kept Widow Stadt alive. At the end of nine months of solitary grief she brought into the world a son, and on the same day the village of Golyn was destroyed by the fall of the hanging cliff above it.

The birth of this son did not dissipate his mother's deep depression. Gill Stadt showed no signs of resemblance to Carroll. His fierce, angry infancy seemed to prophecy a still more ferocious manhood. Sometimes a little wild man — whom those mountaineers who saw him from a distance asserted to be the famous Hans of Iceland — entered the lonely hut of Carroll's widow, and the passers-by would then hear a woman's shrieks and what seemed the roar of a tiger. The man would carry off young

Gill, and months would elapse ; then he would restore him to his mother, more sombre and more terrible than before.

Widow Stadt felt a mixture of horror and affection for the child. Sometimes she would clasp him in her maternal arms, as the only tie which still bound her to earth ; again she would repulse him with terror, calling upon Carroll, her dear Carroll. No one in the world knew what agitated her soul.

Gill reached his twenty-third year ; he saw Guth Stersen, and loved her madly.

Guth Stersen was rich, and he was poor ; therefore he set off for Roeraas and turned miner, in order to make money. His mother never heard from him again.

One night she sat at the wheel, by which she earned her daily bread ; the lamp burned low as she worked and waited in her cabin, beneath those walls which had grown old like herself, in solitude and grief, the silent witnesses of her mysterious wedding-night. She thought anxiously of her son, whose presence, ardently desired as it was, would recall much sorrow, perhaps bring more in its train. The poor mother loved her son, ungrateful as he was. And how could she help loving him, she had suffered so much for him ?

She rose and took from an antique wardrobe a crucifix thickly coated with dust. For an instant she looked at it imploringly ; then suddenly casting it from her in horror, she cried : " I pray ! How can I pray ? Your prayers can only be addressed to hell, poor woman ! You belong to hell, and to hell alone."

She had relapsed into her mournful revery, when there was a knock at the door.

This was a rare event with Widow Stadt. For many long years, in consequence of the strange incidents connected with her history, the whole village of Thoctree believed that she had dealings with evil spirits; no one therefore ever ventured near her hut,—strange superstitions of that age and ignorant region! She owed to her misfortunes the same reputation for witchcraft that the keeper of the Spladgest owed to his learning.

“What if it were my son, if it were Gill!” she exclaimed; and she rushed to the door.

Alas! it was not her son. It was a little monk clad in serge, his cowl covering all of his face but a black beard.

“Holy man,” said the widow, “what would you have? You do not know the house to which you come.”

“Yes, truly!” replied the hermit in a hoarse and all too familiar voice.

And tearing off his gloves, his black beard, and his cowl, he revealed a fierce countenance, a red beard, and a pair of hands armed with tremendous claws.

“Oh!” cried the widow, burying her head in her hands.

“Well,” said the little man, “have you not in four-and-twenty years grown used to seeing the husband upon whom you must gaze through all eternity?”

“Through all eternity!” she repeated in a terrified whisper.

“Hark ye, Lucy Pelryhn, I bring you news of your son.”

“My son! Where is he? Why does he not come?”

"He cannot."

"But you have news of him. I thank you. Alas! and can you bring me pleasure?"

"They are pleasant tidings indeed that I bring you," said the man in hollow tones; "for you are a weak woman, and I wonder that you could bring forth such a son. Rejoice and be glad. You feared that your son would follow in my footsteps; fear no longer."

"What!" cried the enraptured mother, "has my son, my beloved Gill, changed?"

The hermit watched her raptures with an ominous sneer.

"Oh, greatly changed!" said he.

"And why did he not fly to my arms? Where did you see him? What was he doing?"

"He was asleep."

In the excess of her joy, the widow did not notice the little man's ominous look, nor his horrible and scoffing manner.

"Why did you not wake him? Why did not you say to him, 'Gill, come to your mother?'"

"His sleep was too sound."

"Oh, when will he come? Tell me, I implore, if I shall see him soon."

The mock monk drew from beneath his gown a sort of cup of singular shape.

"There, widow," said he, "drink to your son's speedy return!"

The widow uttered a shriek of horror. It was a human skull. She waved it away in terror, and could not utter a word.

"No, no!" abruptly exclaimed the man, in an awful voice, "do not turn away your eyes, woman; look. You asked to see your son. Look, I say! for this is all that is left of him."

And by the red light of the lamp, he offered the dry and fleshless skull of her son to the mother's pale lips.

Too many waves of misfortune had passed over her soul for one misery the more to crush her. She gazed at the cruel monk with a fixed and meaningless stare.

"Dead!" she whispered; "dead! Then let me die."

"Die, if you choose! But remember, Lucy Pelryhn, Thoctree woods; remember the day when the demon, taking possession of your body, gave your soul to hell! I am that demon, Lucy, and you are my wife forever! Now, die if you will."

It is the belief in those superstitious regions that infernal spirits sometimes appear among men to lead lives of crime and calamity. In common with other noted criminals, Hans of Iceland enjoyed this fearful renown. It was also believed that a woman, who by seduction or by violence, became the prey of one of these monsters in human form, by that misfortune was doomed to be his companion in hell.

The events of which the hermit reminded the widow seemed to revive in her these thoughts.

"Alas!" she sobbed, "then I cannot escape from this wretched existence! And what have I done? for you know, my beloved Carroll, I am innocent. A young girl's arm is without strength to resist the arm of a demon."

She rambled on; her eyes were wild with delirium, and

her incoherent words seemed born of the convulsive quiver of her lips.

"Yes, Carroll, since that day, though polluted, I am innocent; and the demon asks me if I remember that horrible day! Carroll, I never deceived you; you came too late. I was his before I was yours, alas! Alas! and I must be forever punished. No, I can never rejoin you,—you for whom I weep. What would it avail me to die? I should follow this monster into a world as fearful as himself,—the world of the damned! And what have I done? Must my misfortunes in this life become my crimes in the next?"

The little monk bent a look of triumph and command upon her face.

"Ah!" she suddenly exclaimed, turning toward him; "ah, tell me, is not this some fearful dream induced by your presence? For you know but too well, alas! that since the day of my ruin, every night that I am visited by your fatal spirit is marked by foul apparitions, awful dreams, and frightful visions."

"Woman, woman, cease your raving; it is as true that you are wide awake as it is true that Gill is dead."

The memory of her past misfortunes had, as it were, blotted out all thought of her fresh grief; these words revived it.

"Oh, my son! my son!" she moaned; and the tones of her voice would have moved any but the wicked being who heard it. "No, he will return; he is not dead; I cannot believe that he is dead."

"Well, go ask him of Roeraas rocks, which crushed out

his life: of Throndhjem Fjord, which swallowed up his body."

The widow fell upon her knees, crying convulsively, "God! great God!"

"Be silent, servant of hell!"

The wretched woman was silent. He added: "Do not doubt your son's death; he was punished for the sins of his father. He let his granite heart melt in the sunlight of a woman's eyes. I possessed you, but I never loved you. Your Carroll's misfortune was also his. My son and yours was deceived by his betrothed, by her for whom he died."

"Died!" she repeated, "died! Then it is really true? Oh, Gill, you were born of my misery; you were conceived in terror and born in sorrow; your lips lacerated my breast; as a child, you never returned my caresses or embraces; you always shunned and repulsed your mother, your lonely and forsaken mother! You never tried to make me forget my past distress, save by causing me fresh injury. You deserted me for the demon author of your existence and of my widowhood. Never, in long years, Gill, never did you procure me one thrill of pleasure; and yet to-day your death, my son, seems to me the most insupportable of all my afflictions. Your memory to-day seems to me to be twined with comfort and rapture. Alas! alas!"

She could not go on; she covered her head with her coarse black woollen veil, and sobbed bitterly.

"Weak woman!" muttered the hermit; then he continued in a firm voice: "Control your grief; I laugh at

mine. Listen, Lucy Pelryhn. While you still weep for your son, I have already begun to avenge him. It was for a soldier in the Monkholm regiment that his sweetheart betrayed him. The whole regiment shall perish by my hands. Look, Lucy Pelryhn!"

He had rolled up the sleeves of his gown, and showed the widow his misshapen arms stained with blood.

"Yes," he said with a fierce roar, "Gill's spirit shall delight to haunt Urechtal Sands and Cascadthymore ravine. Come, woman, do you not see this blood? Be comforted!"

Then all at once, as if struck by a sudden thought, he interrupted himself: "Widow, did you not receive an iron casket from me? What! I sent you gold and I bring you blood, and you still weep. Are you not human?"

The widow, absorbed in her despair, was silent.

"What!" said he, with a fierce laugh, "motionless and mute. You are no woman, then, Lucy Pelryhn!" and he shook her by the arm to rouse her. "Did not a messenger bring you an iron casket?"

The widow, lending him a brief attention, shook her head, and relapsed into her gloomy revery.

"Ah, the wretch!" cried the little man, "the miserable traitor! Spiagudry, that gold shall cost you dear!"

And stripping off his gown, he rushed from the hut with the growl of a hyena that scents a corpse.

XVII.

My lord, I braid my hair ; I braid it with salt tears because you leave me alone, and because you go hence into the hills. — *The Count's Lady* (*Old Romance*).

ETHEL, meantime, had already reckoned four long and weary days since she was left to wander alone in the dark garden of Schleswig tower ; alone in the oratory, the witness of so many tears, the confidant of so many longings ; alone in the long gallery, where once upon a time she had failed to hear the midnight bell. Her aged father sometimes accompanied her, but she was none the less alone, for the true companion of her life was absent.

Unfortunate young girl ! What had that pure young soul done that it should be thus early given over to so much sorrow ? Taken from the world, from honors, riches, youthful delights, and from the triumphs of beauty, she was still in the cradle when she was already in a prison cell ; a captive with her captive father, she had grown up watching his decay ; and to complete her misery, that she might not be ignorant of any form of bondage, love had sought her out in prison.

Even then, could she but have kept her Ordener at her side, would liberty have tempted her ? Would she ever have known that a world existed from which she was cut off ? Moreover, would not her world, her heaven, have

been with her in that narrow keep, within those gloomy towers bristling with soldiers, toward which the passer-by would still have cast a pitying glance ?

But, alas ! for the second time her Ordener was absent ; and instead of spending all too brief but ever recurring hours with him in holy caresses and chaste embraces, she passed days and nights in bewailing his absence, and praying that he might be shielded from danger. For a maiden has only her prayers and her tears.

Sometimes she longed for the wings of the free swallow which came to her to be fed through her prison bars. Sometimes her thought escaped upon the cloud which a swift breeze drove northward through the sky ; then suddenly she would turn away her head and cover her eyes, as if she dreaded to see a gigantic brigand appear and begin the unequal contest upon one of the distant mountains whose blue peaks hung on the horizon like a stationary cloud.

Oh, it is cruel to live when we are parted from the object of our love ! Few hearts have known this pang in all its extent, because few hearts have known love in all its depth. Then, in some sort a stranger to our ordinary existence, we create for ourselves a melancholy waste, a vast solitude, and for the absent one some terrible world of peril, of monsters, and of deceit ; the various faculties which make up our being are changed into and lost in an infinite longing for the missing one ; everything about us seems utterly indifferent to us. And yet we still breathe, and move, and act, but without our own volition. Like a wandering planet which has lost its sun, the body moves at random ; the soul is elsewhere.



XVIII.

On a vast buckler those relentless men
Terrified hell with fearful oaths ;
And beside a black bull which they had slain,
All, bathing their hands in blood, swore to be revenged.

The Seven Chiefs before Thebes.

THE coast of Norway abounds in narrow bays, in creeks, coves, reefs, lagoons, and little headlands so numerous as to weary the traveller's memory and the topographer's patience. Formerly, if we are to credit popular tradition, every isthmus was haunted by some demon, each bay inhabited by some fairy, each promontory protected by some saint ; superstition mingles all beliefs to create for itself imaginary terrors. Upon Kelvel strand, some miles to the north of Walderhog cave, there was but a single spot, they said, which was free from all jurisdiction either of infernal, intermediary, or celestial

spirits. It was the glade lying along the shore, overhanging by a cliff, on the top of which could still be seen vestiges of the manor of Ralph, or Rudolf, the Giant. This little wild meadow, bordered on the west by the sea, and closely shut in by rocks clad with heather, owed its exemption solely to the name of that ancient Norwegian lord, its first possessor. For what fairy, what devil, or what angel would venture to become master or guest of a domain once occupied and guarded by Ralph the Giant?

It is true that the mere name of the much dreaded Ralph sufficed to give an alarming character to a region wild in itself. But after all, a memory is not so much to be feared as a spirit; and no fisher, belated in rough weather, and mooring his bark in Ralph's creek, had ever seen the will-o'-the-wisp sport and dance upon the summit of a rock, or a fairy ride through the heather in her phosphorescent car drawn by glow-worms, or a saint ascend toward the moon, after his prayers were said.

And yet, if the angry waves and wind had allowed a wandering mariner to land in that hospitable harbor upon the night after the great storm, he might have been struck with superstitious fear at the sight of three men, who upon that same night sat around a huge fire, blazing in the middle of the meadow. Two of them wore the broad felt hat and loose trousers of royal miners. Their arms were bare to the shoulder, their feet were cased in fawn-colored leather boots; a red sash held their crooked swords and heavy pistols; each had a hunter's horn slung about his neck. One was old, the other was young; the old

man's thick beard and the young man's long hair lent a wild and barbarous look to their faces, which were naturally hard and stern.

By his bearskin cap, his tanned leather jacket, the musket slung across his back, his short, tight-fitting drawers, his bare knees, his bark shoes, and the glittering axe in his hand, it was easy to guess that the companion of the two miners was a mountaineer from the north of Norway.

Certainly, any one who saw from afar these three weird figures, upon which the flames, fanned by the salt breeze, cast a red, flickering light, might well have been frightened, even had he no faith in spectres and demons; it would have been enough that he believed in thieves and was somewhat richer than the ordinary poet.

The three men constantly turned their heads toward the winding path through the wood which fringes Ralph's meadow, and judging by such of their words as were not carried off by the wind, they were expecting a fourth person.

"I say, Kennybol, do you know that we should not be allowed to wait so peacefully for this envoy from Count Griffenfeld, if we were in the neighboring meadow, Goblin Tulbytilbet's meadow, or yonder in St. Cuthbert's bay?"

"Don't talk so loud, Jonas," replied the mountaineer; "blessed be Ralph the Giant, who protects us! Heaven save me from setting foot in Tulbytilbet's meadow! The other day I thought I was picking hawthorn there, and I gathered mandrake instead, which began to bleed and shriek, and nearly drove me mad."

The young miner laughed.

"Nearly, Kennybol? For my part, I think that the mandrake's shriek produced its full effect upon your feeble brains."

"Feeble brains yourself!" said the vexed mountaineer; "just see, Jonas, he jests at mandrake. He laughs like a lunatic playing with a death's-head."

"Hum!" answered Jonas. "Let him go to Walderhog cave, where the heads of those whom Hans, the foul fiend of Iceland, has murdered, come back every night to dance about his bed of withered leaves, and gnash their teeth to lull him to sleep."

"That's so," said the mountaineer.

"But," rejoined the young man, "did not Mr. Hacket, for whom we are waiting, promise us that Hans of Iceland would take the lead in our rebellion?"

"He did," replied Kennybol; "and with the help of that demon we are sure to conquer the green jackets of Thronhjelm and Copenhagen."

"So much the better!" cried the old miner. "But I'm not the man to stand guard beside him at night."

At this moment the rustle of dead leaves beneath the tread of a man drew the attention of the speakers; they turned, and the firelight gleamed on the new-comer's face.

"It is he! it is Mr. Hacket! Welcome, Mr. Hacket; you have kept us waiting. We have been here this three quarters of an hour."

"Mr. Hacket" was a short, fat man, dressed in black, and his jovial countenance wore a forbidding expression.

"Well, friends," said he, "I was delayed by my igno-

rance of the road and the necessary precautions. I left Count Schumacker this morning; here are three purses of gold which he bade me give you."

The two old men flung themselves upon the gold with the eagerness common among the peasants of barren Norway. The young miner declined the purse which Hacket offered him.

"Keep your gold, Sir Envoy; I should lie if I said that I had joined the revolt for your Count Schumacker's sake. I rebel to free the miners from the guardianship of the crown; I rebel that my mother's bed may have a blanket less ragged than the coast of our good country, Norway."

Far from seeming disconcerted, Mr. Hacket answered smilingly, "Then I will send this money to your poor mother, my dear Norbith, so that she may have two new blankets to shield her from the cold wind this winter."

The young man assented with a nod, and the envoy, like a skilful orator, made haste to add:—

"But be careful not to repeat what you just now inconsiderately said, that you are not taking up arms in behalf of Schumacker, Count Griffenfeld."

"But—but," muttered the two old men, "we know very well that the miners are oppressed, but we know nothing about this count, this prisoner of state."

"What!" sharply rejoined the envoy; "are you so ungrateful? You groan in your subterranean caves, deprived of light and air, robbed of all your property, slaves to the most onerous tutelage! Who came to your rescue? Who revived your failing courage? Who gave you gold and

arms? Was it not my illustrious master, noble Count Griffenfeld, more of a slave and more unfortunate even than you? And now, loaded with his favors, would you refuse to use them to acquire his liberty with your own?"

"You are right," interrupted the young miner; "that would be an ill deed."

"Yes, Mr. Hacket," said the two old men, "we will fight for Count Schumacker."

"Courage, my friends! Rise in his name; bear your benefactor's name from one end of Norway to the other. Only listen; everything seconds your righteous enterprise; you are about to be freed from a formidable enemy, General Levin de Knud, governor of the province. The secret power of my noble master, Count Griffenfeld, will soon procure his recall to Bergen. Come, tell me, Kennybol, Jonas, and you, my dear Norbith, are all your comrades ready?"

"My brethren of Guldbrandsdal," said Norbith, "only await my signal. To-morrow, if you wish —"

"To-morrow; so be it. The young miners under your leadership must be the first to raise the standard. And you, my brave Jonas?"

"Six hundred heroes from the Färöe Islands, who for three days have lived on chamois flesh and bear's fat in Bennallag forest, only ask a blast from the horn of their old captain, Jonas of Loevig town."

"Good! And you, Kennybol?"

"All those who carry an axe in the gorges of Kiölen, and climb the rocks with bare knees, are ready to join their brothers, the miners, when they need them."

"Enough. Tell your comrades that they need not doubt their victory," added the envoy, raising his voice; "for Hans of Iceland will be their captain."

"Is that certain?" asked all three at once, in a voice of mingled hope and fear.

The envoy answered: "I will meet you four days hence, at the same hour, with your united forces, in Apsyl-Corh mine, near Lake Miösen, on Blue Star plain. Hans of Iceland will be with me."

"We will be there," said the three leaders. "And may God not desert those whom the Devil aids!"

"Fear nothing from God," said Hacket, with a sneer. "Stay; you will find flags for your troops among the ruins of Crag. Do not forget the war-cry, 'Long live Schumacker! We will rescue Schumacker!'" Now we must part; day will shortly break. But first, swear the most profound secrecy as to what has passed between us."

Without a word each of the three chiefs opened a vein in his left arm with the point of his sword; then, seizing the envoy's hand, each let a few drops of blood trickle into it.

"You have our blood," they said.

Then the young man exclaimed: "May all my blood flow forth like that which I now shed; may a malicious spirit destroy my plans, as the hurricane does a straw; may my arm be of lead to avenge an insult; may bats dwell in my tomb; may I, still living, be haunted by the dead, and dead, be profaned by the living; may my eyes melt with tears like those of a woman, if ever I speak of what has occurred at this time in Ralph the Giant's

meadow. And may the blessed saints deign to hear this, my prayer ! ”

“ Amen ! ” repeated the two old men.

Then they parted, and nothing was left in the meadow but the smouldering fire, whose expiring embers burned up at intervals, and gleamed upon the summit of Ralph the Giant’s ruined and deserted towers.



XIX.

Theodore. Tristam, let us be gone.

Tristam. This is a strange disgrace.

Theodore. Did any one see us ?

Tristam. I know not, but I fear they did.

LOPE DA VEGA : *The Gardener's Dog.*

BENIGNUS SPIAGUDRY found it hard to guess the motives which led a youth of fine appearance, and apparently likely to live for many long years, to become the voluntary antagonist of the much-dreaded Hans of Iceland. He had frequently and with much ingenuity broached the question since they started on their travels ; but the young adventurer preserved a stubborn silence as to the cause of his journey. Nor was the poor fellow any more successful in satisfying his curiosity concerning various other details as to his strange comrade. Once he ventured to ask a question about his young master's

family and his name. "Call me Ordener," was the reply ; and this very unsatisfactory answer was given in a tone which forbade further question. He was forced to submit ; every one has his secrets, and good Spiagudry himself carefully concealed in his wallet, under his cloak, a certain mysterious casket, any inquiry as to which he would certainly have considered very disagreeable and greatly out of place.

Four days had passed since they left Throndhjem, but they had made little progress, owing to the bad state of the roads after the storm, and the multiplicity of cross-cuts and roundabout routes which the runaway keeper thought it prudent to take in order to avoid too thickly settled regions. Leaving Skongen on their right, toward evening of the fourth day they reached the shores of Lake Sparbo.

The vast stretch of water reflecting the last gleams of daylight and the first stars of coming night set in a frame of tall cliffs, black firs, and lofty oaks, presented a gloomy but magnificent picture. The sight of a lake at evening sometimes produces, at a certain distance, a peculiar optical illusion ; it seems as if a vast abyss, cleaving the earth from side to side, revealed the heavens beneath our feet.

Ordener paused to contemplate the old Druidical forests, which cover the steep shores of the lake as with a garment, and the chalky huts of Sparbo, scattered over the slope like a stray flock of white goats. He listened to the distant clink of the forges,¹ mingled with the dull roar of the weird forests, the intermittent cry of wild birds,

¹ The waters of Lake Sparbo are greatly used for tempering steel.

and the solemn music of the waves. To the north a huge granite boulder, still gilded by the rays of the sun, rose majestically above the little village of Oëlmœ, its summit bending beneath a mass of ruined towers, as if the giant were weary of his load.

When the soul is sad, it delights in melancholy scenes; it adds to them its own gloom. Let an unhappy man be thrown among wild, high mountains beside some black lake in the heart of a dark forest, at the close of day, and he will see this solemn scene through a funereal veil; he will not feel that the sun is setting, but that it is dying.

Ordener lingered, motionless and mute, until his companion exclaimed: "Capital, sir! You do well to ponder thus beside the most miasma-laden lake in Norway."

This remark and the gesture which accompanied it, would have brought a smile to the lips of any but a lover parted from his mistress perhaps never again to meet her. The learned keeper added:—

"And yet I must rouse you from your meditations to remind you that day is drawing to a close, and we must make haste if we would reach Oëlmœ village before twilight overtakes us."

The observation was correct. Ordener resumed his journey, and Spiagudry followed him, continuing his unheeded reflections upon the botanic and physiologic phenomena which Lake Sparbo affords the naturalist.

"Mr. Ordener," said he, "if you will listen to your devoted guide, you will give up your fatal enterprise; yes, sir, and you will take up your abode upon the shores of this most curious lake, where we can devote ourselves to

all sorts of learned research; for instance, to the study of the *stella canora palustris*, — a singular plant, which many scholars consider to be fabulous, but which Bishop Arngrimmsson asserts that he both saw and heard on the shores of Lake Sparbo. Added to this, we shall have the satisfaction of feeling that we dwell upon soil which contains more gypsum than any other in Europe, and where the hired assassins of Throindhjem are least likely to find their way. Does n't it attract you, young master? Come, renounce your senseless journey; for, not to offend you, your scheme is dangerous, without being profitable, — *periculum sine pecunia*; that is to say, senseless, and conceived at a moment when you might better have been thinking of other things."

Orderer, who paid no attention to the poor man's words, merely kept up the conversation by those occasional meaningless monosyllables which great talkers are ready to accept in lieu of answers. Thus they reached Oëlmœe village, where they found an unusual bustle and stir.

The inhabitants — hunters, fishers, and blacksmiths — had left their houses, and hastily collected about a central mound occupied by a group of men, one of whom blew a horn and waved a small black-and-white banner over his head.

"Probably some quack doctor," said Spiagudry, — "*ambaiarum collegia, pharmacopolæ*; some scamp who turns gold into lead and wounds into sores. Let us see. What invention of the Evil One will he sell these poor rustics? It would be bad enough if these impostors confined themselves to kings, if they all imitated Borch

the Dane and Borri of Milan, those alchemists who so completely duped our Frederic III.;¹ but they are just as greedy for the peasant's mite as for the prince's million."

Spiagudry was mistaken. As they approached the mound they recognized by his black gown and round, pointed cap, the mayor, surrounded by a number of bowmen. The man blowing the horn was the town crier.

The fugitive keeper, somewhat disturbed, muttered: "Truly, Mr. Ordener, I did not expect to stumble upon the mayor when I came into this hamlet. Great Saint Hospitius, protect us! What does he say?"

His uncertainty was of brief duration, for the crier's shrill voice was quickly raised, and religiously heeded by the little group of villagers.

"In the name of his Majesty and by order of his Excellency, General Levin de Knud, governor, the lord mayor of Thronthjem notifies the inhabitants of all cities, towns, and villages in the province, that a reward of one thousand crowns is offered for the head of Hans, a native of Klipstadur, in Iceland, a murderer and incendiary."

A vague murmur ran through the crowd. The crier continued:—

"A reward of four crowns is offered for the head of Benignus Spiagudry, ex-keeper of the Spladgest at

¹ Frederic III. was the victim of Borch, or Borrich, a Danish chemist, and more especially of Borri, a Milanese quack, who declared himself to be the favorite of the Archangel Michael. This impostor, after startling Strasburg and Amsterdam with his pretended miracles, increased the sphere of his ambition and the boldness of his lies; having deceived the people, he ventured to deceive kings. He began with Queen Christina at Hamburg, and ended with King Frederic at Copenhagen.

Throndhjem, accused of necromancy and sacrilege. This proclamation shall be published throughout the province by the mayors of all cities, towns, and villages, who will see that it is carried out."

The mayor took the proclamation from the crier's hands, and added in a lugubrious and solemn voice : —

"The life of these men is offered to whosoever will take it."

The reader will readily believe that this reading was not heard unmoved by our poor, unfortunate Spiagudry. No doubt, the unusual signs of terror which he showed would have roused the attention of the bystanders, had it not just then been wholly absorbed by the first clause of the proclamation.

"A reward for the head of Hans!" cried an old fisherman, who had hastened to the spot, trailing his wet nets behind him. "They might as well, by Saint Usuph, set a price upon the head of Beelzebub!"

"To keep up a proper balance between Hans and Beelzebub," said a hunter, recognizable by his chamois-skin jerkin, "they should only offer fifteen hundred crowns for the head and horns of the latter fiend."

"Glory be to the holy mother of God!" cried an old woman, her bald head shaking as she twirled her distaff. "I only wish I might see the head of that Hans, so that I might make sure if his eyes are really live coals, as they say."

"Yes, to be sure," replied another old woman; "it was just by looking at it that he set Throndhjem cathedral on fire. Now I should like to see the monster whole,

with his serpent's tail, cloven foot, and broad wings like a bat."

"Who told you such nonsense, good mother?" broke in the hunter, with a self-satisfied air. "I've seen this Hans of Iceland with my own eyes in the gorges of Medsyhath; he is a man like ourselves, only he is as tall as a forty-year-old poplar."

"Indeed!" said a voice from the crowd, with singular emphasis.

This voice, which made Spiagudry shudder, proceeded from a short man whose face was hidden by the broad felt hat of a miner, his body wrapped in rush matting and sealskin.

"Faith!" cried, with a coarse laugh, a smith who wore his heavy hammer slung across his shoulder, "they may offer one thousand or ten thousand crowns for his head, and he may be four or forty feet tall, but I'll not offer to go in search of him."

"Nor I," said the fisherman.

"Nor I; nor I," repeated every voice.

"And yet any one who may feel tempted," rejoined the little man, "will find Hans of Iceland to-morrow at the ruins of Arbar, near Lake Miösen; the day after that at Walderhog cave."

"Are you sure, my good man?"

This question was asked at one and the same time by Ordener, who listened to this scene with an interest easily understood by any one but Spiagudry, and by another short and tolerably stout man, dressed in black, with a merry countenance, who had issued from the only inn

which the village contained, at the first sound of the crier's horn.

The little man with the broad-brimmed hat seemed to be studying them both for a moment, and then answered in hollow tones: "Yes."

"And how can you be so certain?" asked Ordener.

"I know where Hans of Iceland is, just as well as I know where Benignus Spiagudry is; neither of them is far off at this instant."

All the poor keeper's terrors were revived, and he scarcely dared look at the mysterious little man. Fancying that his French periwig had failed to disguise him, he began to pluck at Ordener's cloak and to whisper: "Master, sir, in Heaven's name, have mercy! have pity! let us be off! let us leave this accursed suburb of hell!"

Ordener, although equally surprised, carefully examined the little man, who, turning his back to the light, seemed anxious to conceal his face.

"I've seen that Benignus Spiagudry," cried the fisherman, "at Throndhjem Spladgest. He's a tall fellow. They offer four crowns for him."

The hunter burst out laughing.

"Four crowns! I sha'n't go a-hunting for him. I can get more for the skin of a blue fox."

This comparison, which at any other time would have greatly offended the learned keeper, now comforted him. Still, he was about to address another prayer to Ordener to persuade him to continue his journey, when the latter, having learned all that he wished to know, forestalled him

by making his way out of the crowd, which was beginning to disperse.

Although when they entered Oëlmœ village they had intended passing the night there, they quitted it, as if by common consent, without even alluding to the motive for their abrupt departure. Ordener was moved by the hope of a more speedy meeting with the brigand, Spiagudry by a desire to get away from the archers as speedily as might be.

Ordener was in too serious a mood to laugh at his comrade's misadventures. He broke the silence in kindly tones.

"Old man, what is the name of the ruin where Hans is to be found to-morrow, according to that little man who seemed to know everything?"

"I don't know ; I did n't quite catch the name, noble master," replied Spiagudry, who uttered no falsehood in so saying.

"Then," continued the young man, "I must make up my mind not to meet him until the day after to-morrow at Walderhog cave."

"Walderhog cave, sir! Indeed, that is Hans of Iceland's favorite haunt."

"Let us take that road," said Ordener.

"We must turn to the left, behind Oëlmœ cliff. It will take us at least two days to get to Walderhog cave."

"Do you know, old man," cautiously observed Ordener, "who that odd fellow was, who seemed to be so well acquainted with you?"

This question again awakened Spiagudry's fears, which

had been lulled to sleep as the village of Oëlmœ faded in the distance.

"No, truly, sir," he answered, in trembling accents. "But he had a very strange voice."

Ordener tried to encourage him.

"Fear nothing, old man ; serve me well, and I will protect you. If I return victorious over Hans, I promise you not only a pardon, but I will also give you the thousand crowns reward offered by the officers of the law."

Honest Benignus dearly loved his life, but he also loved gold. Ordener's promises sounded like magic in his ears ; they not only banished all his terrors, but they excited in him a kind of garrulous mirth, which found vent in lengthy discourses, queer gestures, and learned quotations.

"Mr. Ordener," said he, "if I should ever have occasion to discuss the subject with Over-Bilseuth, otherwise called 'the Babbler,' nothing shall prevent me from maintaining that you are a wise and honorable young man. What more worthy and more glorious, in fact, *quid cithara, tuba, vel campana dignius*, than nobly to risk your life to free your country from a monster, a brigand, a demon, in whom all demons, brigands, and monsters seem to be combined ? Nobody need tell me that you are moved by mercenary motives. Noble Lord Ordener yields the price of his conflict to the companion of his journey, to the old man who only guided him within a mile of Walderhog cave ; for I am sure, young master, that you will allow me to await the result of your illustrious enterprise at the village of Surb, situated in the forest within a mile of Walderhog,

will you not? And when your glorious victory is made known, sir, all Norway will thrill with joy like that of Vermund the Refugee, when from the summit of this same Oelme cliff, which we just now passed, he saw the great fire kindled by his brother Halfdan on Munkholm tower in token of his deliverance."

At these words Ordener interrupted him eagerly.

"What! is Munkholm tower visible from the top of this rock?"

"Yes, sir; twelve miles to the south, between the mountains which our fathers called Frigga's Footstools. At this hour you should be able to see the light in the tower distinctly."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Ordener, fired by the idea of another glimpse of the seat of all his happiness. "Old man, of course there is a path leading to the top of the rock, is there not?"

"Yes, to be sure; a path which begins in the wood that lies just before us, and rises by a gentle slope to the bare crown of the cliff, whence it is continued by steps cut in the rock by Vermund's companions, as far as the castle, where it ends. Those are the ruins which you see in the moonlight."

"Well, old man, you shall show me the path; we will spend the night in those ruins,—in those ruins from which Munkholm tower is visible."

"Can you really mean it, sir?" asked Benignus. "The fatigues of the day —"

"Old man, I will support your steps; my footing was never more secure."

"Sir, the brambles that block the path, which has long been deserted, the fallen stones, the darkness —"

"I will take the lead."

"There may be some savage beast, some unclean animal, some hideous monster —"

"I did not undertake this journey to avoid monsters."

The idea of halting so near Oëlmœ was very unpleasant to Spiagudry; the thought of seeing Munkholm light, and possibly the light in Ethel's window, enraptured and transported Ordener.

"Young master," urged Spiagudry, "give up this scheme; take my advice. I have a presentiment that it will bring us bad luck."

This plea was as nothing in the face of Ordener's longing.

"Come," said he, impatiently, "you must remember that you agreed to serve me faithfully. I insist upon your showing me the path; where is it?"

"We shall come across it directly," said the keeper, forced to obey.

In fact, they soon saw the path. They entered it; but Spiagudry observed, with surprise mixed with fright, that the tall grass was broken and trampled, and that Vermund the Refugee's old footpath seemed to have been recently trodden.

XX.

Leonardo. The king requires your presence.

Henrique. How so ?

LOPE DA VEGA : *La Fuerza Lastinosa.*

GENERAL LEVIN DE KNUD sat at his desk, which was covered with papers and open letters, apparently lost in thought. A secretary stood before him awaiting his orders. The general now struck the rich carpet beneath his feet with his spurs, and now absently toyed with the decoration of the Elephant, hanging about his neck from the collar of the order. Occasionally he opened his lips as if to speak, then stopped, rubbed his head, and cast another glance at the unsealed despatches littering the table.

“How the devil !” he cried at last.

This conclusive exclamation was followed by a brief silence.

“Who would ever have imagined,” he resumed, “that those devilish miners would have gone so far ? Of course they were secretly egged on to this revolt ; but do you know, Wapherney, the thing looks serious ? Do you know that five or six hundred scoundrels from the Färöe Islands, headed by a certain old thief named Jonas, have already quitted the mines ; that a young fanatic called Norbith has also taken command of the Guldbrandsdal malcon-

tents; that all the hot-heads in Sund-Moer, Hubfallo, and Kongsberg, who were only waiting the signal, may have risen already? Do you know that the mountaineers have joined the movement, and that they are headed by one of the boldest foxes of Kiölen, old Kennybol? And finally, do you know that according to popular report in northern Throndhjem, if we are to believe the lord mayor, who has written me, that notorious criminal, upon whose head we have set a price, the much-dreaded Hans, has taken chief command of the insurrection? What do you say to all this, my dear Wapherney? Ahem!"

"Your Excellency," said Wapherney, "knows what measures —"

"There is still another circumstance connected with this lamentable affair which I cannot explain; that is, how our prisoner Schumacker can be the author of the revolt, as they claim. This seems to surprise no one, but it surprises me more than anything else. It is hard to believe that a man whose company my faithful Ordener loves can be a traitor; and yet it is asserted that the miners have risen in his name, — his name is their watch-word. They even give him the titles of which the king deprived him. All this seems certain; but how does it happen that Countess d'Ahlefeld knew all these details a week ago, at a time when the first real symptoms of trouble had scarcely begun to appear in the mines? It is strange! No matter, I must provide for every emergency. Give me my seal, Wapherney."

The general wrote three letters, sealed them, and handed them to his secretary.

"See that this message is sent to Baron Vœthain, colonel of musketeers, now garrisoned at Munkholm, so that his regiment may march at once to the seat of the revolt; this to the officer in command at Munkholm, an order to guard the ex-chancellor more closely than ever. I must see and question this Schumacker myself. Then despatch this letter to Skongen, to Major Wollm, who is in command there, directing him to send forward a portion of the garrison to the centre of rebellion. Go, Wapherney, and see that these orders are executed at once."

The secretary went out, leaving the governor plunged in meditation.

"All this is very alarming," thought he. "These miners rebelling in one place, this chancellor intriguing in another, that crazy Ordener — nobody knows where! He may be travelling in the very midst of all these rioters, leaving Schumacker here under my protection to conspire against the State, and his daughter, for whose safety I have been kind enough to remove the company of soldiers to which that Frederic d'Ahlefeld belongs, whom Ordener accuses of — Why, it seems to me that this very company might easily stop the advance columns of the insurgents; it is very well situated for that. Wahlstrom, where it is stationed, is near Lake Miösen and Arbar ruin. That is one of the places of which the rebels will be sure to take possession."

At this point in his revery, the general was interrupted by the sound of the opening door.

"Well, what do you want, Gustavus?"

"General, a messenger asks to speak for a moment with your Excellency."

"Well, what is it now? What fresh disaster! Let the messenger come in."

The messenger entered, and handed a packet to the governor, saying, "From his highness the viceroy, your Excellency."

The general hurriedly tore open the despatch.

"By Saint George!" he cried, with a start of surprise, "I believe that they have all gone mad! If here is not the viceroy requesting me to proceed to Bergen. He says it is on urgent business, by order of the king. A fine time this to transact urgent business! 'The lord chancellor, now travelling in the province of Thronhjøm, will take your place during your absence.' Here's a substitute in whom I have no confidence! 'The bishop will assist him —' Really, these are excellent governors that Fred-eric chooses for a country in a state of revolt,—two gentlemen of the cloth, a chancellor, and a bishop! Well, no matter, the invitation is express; it is the order of the king. Needs must obey; but before I go I must see Schumacker and question him. I am sure that there is a plot to involve me in a network of intrigue; but I have one unerring compass,—my conscience."



XXI.

The voice of thy slain brother's blood cries out,
Even from the ground, unto the Lord !

Cain : A Mystery.

“YES, Count; it was this very day, in Arbar ruin, that we were told he might be found. Countless circumstances lead me to believe in the truth of this valuable information which I accidentally picked up yesterday, as I told you, at Oëlmœ village.”

“Are we far from this Arbar ruin ?”

“It is close by Lake Miösen. The guide assures me that we shall be there before noon.”

These words were spoken by two horsemen muffled in brown cloaks, who early one morning were pursuing one of the many narrow, winding paths which run in every direction through the forest lying between Lakes Miösen and Sparbo. A mountain guide, provided with a hunting-

horn and an axe, led the way upon his little gray pony, and behind the travellers rode four men armed to the teeth, toward whom these two persons occasionally turned, as if afraid of being overheard.

"If that Iceland thief is really lurking in Arbar ruin," said one rider, whose steed kept a respectful distance behind the other, "it is a great point gained; for the difficulty hitherto has been to find this mysterious being."

"Do you think so, Musdcæmon? And suppose he declines our offers?"

● "Impossible, your Grace! What brigand could resist gold and a free pardon?"

"But you know that this is no common scoundrel. Do not judge him by yourself. If he should refuse, how can you keep your promise of night before last to the three leaders of the insurrection?"

"Well, noble Count, in that case, which I regard as impossible if we are lucky enough to find our man, has your Grace forgotten that a false Hans of Iceland awaits me two days hence at the hour and place appointed for meeting the three chiefs, at Blue Star, a place, moreover, conveniently near Arbar ruin?"

"You are right, my dear Musdcæmon, as usual," said the count; and each resumed his own particular line of thought.

Musdcæmon, whose interest it was to keep his master in good humor, for the purpose of diverting him, asked the guide a question.

"My good man, what is that ruined stone cross yonder, behind those young oaks?"

The guide, a man with fixed stare and stupid mien, turned his head and shook it several times, as he said: "Oh, master, that is the oldest gallows in Norway; holy king Olaf had it built for a judge who made a compact with a robber."

Musdæmon saw by his patron's face that the guide's artless words had produced an effect quite contrary to that which he hoped.

"It is a curious story," the guide added; "good Mother Osia told it to me. The robber was ordered to hang the judge."

The poor guide, in his simplicity, did not suppose that the incident with which he meant to entertain his employers was almost an insult to them. Musdæmon stopped him.

"That will do," said he; "we have heard the story before."

"Insolent fellow!" muttered the count, "he has heard the story before. Ah, Musdæmon, you shall pay for your impudence yet."

"Did your Grace speak to me?" obsequiously asked Musdæmon.

"I was thinking how I could obtain the Order of the Dannebrog for you. The marriage of my daughter Ulrica and Baron Ordener would be an excellent opportunity."

Musdæmon was profuse in protestations and thanks.

"By the way," added his Grace, "let us talk business. Do you suppose that the temporary recall which we sent him has reached the Mecklenburger?"

The reader may remember that the count was in the

habit of thus designating General Levin de Knud, who was indeed a native of Mecklenburg.

"Let us talk business!" thought the injured Musdæmon; "it seems that my affairs are not 'business.' Count," he replied aloud, "I think that the viceroy's messenger must be in Throndhjem by this time, and therefore General Levin must be getting ready to start."

The count assumed a kindly tone.

"That recall, my dear fellow, was one of your master-strokes,—one of your best planned and most skilfully executed intrigues."

"The credit belongs as much to your Grace as to me," replied Musdæmon, careful, as we have already remarked, to mix the count in all his machinations.

The master understood this secret desire of his confidant, but chose to seem unconscious of it.

He smiled.

"My dear private secretary, you are always modest; but nothing can make me depreciate your most eminent services. Elphega's presence and the Mecklenburger's absence assure my triumph in Throndhjem. I am now at the head of the province; and if Hans of Iceland accepts the command of the rebels, which I intend to offer him in person, to me will fall, in the eyes of the king, the glory of putting down this distressing insurrection and capturing this terrible brigand."

They were chatting thus in low voices when the guide rode back to them.

"Masters," said he, "here on our left is the hillock upon which Biorn the Just had the double-tongued

Vellon beheaded in the presence of his entire army, the traitor having driven off the king's allies and summoned the enemy to the camp, that he might have the appearance of saving Biorn's life."

All these reminiscences of old Norway did not seem to be to Musdæmon's taste, for he hurriedly interrupted the guide.

"Come, come, good man, be silent and go your way, without turning back so often. What do we care about the foolish stories of which these ruins and dead trees remind you? You annoy my master with your old wives' tales."



XXII.

Now the hungry lion roars,
And the wolf howls the moon ;
While the heavy ploughman snores,
All with weary task foredone.
Now the wasted brands do glow,
Whilst the screech-owl, screeching loud,
Puts the wretch that lies in woe
In remembrance of a shroud.
Now it is the time of night,
That the graves, all gaping wide,
Every one lets forth his sprite,
In the church-way paths to glide.

SHAKESPEARE: *Midsummer Night's Dream*.

LET us now retrace our steps. We left Ordener and Spiagudry struggling laboriously up the brow of Oölmœ cliff by the light of the rising moon. This rock, bare of vegetation at the point where it begins to curve, is, from this peculiarity, called by the Norwegian peasants

the Vulture's Neck,—a name which gives an excellent idea of the aspect of this huge granite boulder as seen from a distance.

As our travellers approached this part of the rock, the forest changed to heather. Grass gave place to moss; wild brier-roses, broom, and holly were substituted for oaks and beeches,—a scantier growth, which in mountainous regions always shows that the summit is near, as it indicates the gradual diminution of the stratum of earth covering what may be termed the skeleton of the mountain.

"Mr. Ordener," said Spiagudry, whose lively mind seemed ever a prey to a varying world of ideas, "this is a very tiresome climb, and it takes all my devotion to follow you. But it seems to me that I see a superb *convolvulus* yonder to the right; how I should like to examine it. Why is it not broad daylight? Don't you think it was a great piece of impertinence to value a learned man like me at no more than four paltry crowns? 'Tis true, the famous Phædrus was a slave, and Æsop, if we are to believe the learned Planudes, was sold at a fair like a beast of burden or household chattel. And who would not be proud to bear any sort of resemblance to the great Æsop?"

"Or to the celebrated Hans?" added Ordener, with a smile.

"By Saint Hospitius," replied the keeper, "do not utter that name so lightly; I swear I could readily forego the latter comparison. But would n't it be strange if Benignus Spiagudry, his companion in misfortune, should win the

reward for his head ! Mr. Ordener, you are more generous than Jason, for he did not give the golden fleece to the Argonaut pilot ; and I am sure that your mission, although I do not clearly understand its object, is no less perilous than that of Jason."

"Well," said Ordener, "since you know Hans of Iceland, tell me something about him. You say that he is by no means a giant, as is generally supposed."

Spiagudry interrupted him : "Stop, master ! Don't you hear footsteps behind us ?"

"Yes," quietly answered the young man ; "don't be alarmed ; it is some animal frightened at our coming, and brushing against the bushes in its flight."

"You are right, my young Cæsar ; it is so long since these woods have seen the face of man ! If we may judge by its heavy tread, it must be a good-sized animal. It may be an elk or a reindeer ; this part of Norway abounds in these beasts. Wildcats are also found here ; I saw one myself, which was brought to Copenhagen ; he was monstrous big. I must give you a description of this ferocious animal."

"My dear guide," said Ordener, "I would rather that you would give me a description of another and no less ferocious monster, the horrible Hans."

"Speak lower, sir ! How calmly you utter that name ! You do not know — Good Heavens, sir ! just hear that !"

As Spiagudry said this, he drew closer to Ordener, who did indeed distinctly hear a cry similar to the growl which, as the reader may remember, had so alarmed the timid

keeper on the stormy night of their departure from Throndhjem.

"Did you hear that?" he whispered, breathless with fright.

"To be sure I did," said Ordener; "but I don't see why you tremble so violently. It is the howl of some wild beast, possibly the cry of one of those very wildcats of which you were just talking. Did you expect to pass through such a place at this time of night without disturbing any of its inhabitants? I'll warrant you, old man, they are far more frightened than you are."

Spiagudry, seeing his young companion's composure, was somewhat reassured.

"Well, it may be, sir, that you are right. But that yell sounded terribly like a voice that I— It was a very poor idea, let me tell you, sir, to insist upon climbing up to this Vermund's castle. I fear we shall meet with some accident on the Vulture's Neck."

"Fear nothing while you are with me," answered Ordener.

"Oh, nothing disturbs you; but, sir, nobody but the blessed Saint Paul can handle vipers without getting bitten. You did not even notice, when we struck into this confounded footpath, that it seemed to have been recently trodden, and that the grass had not had time to lift its head since it was trampled."

"I confess that I did not pay much heed to it, and that my peace of mind is not dependent upon the state of a few blades of grass. See, we are now out of the thicket; we shall hear no more from the wild beasts; I need not

therefore tell you, my brave guide, to summon all your courage, but rather bid you muster all your strength, for this path, cut in the rock, will doubtless be even steeper than the one we have left."

"It is not that it is steeper, sir, but the learned traveller, Suckson, says that it is often impeded by rocks or heavy stones too big to be handled, over which it is not easy to clamber. Among others, there is, just beyond the Maläer postern, which must be close at hand, a huge triangular granite boulder, which I have always had the greatest desire to see. Schoenning asserts that he discovered the three primitive Runic characters on it."

The travellers had for some time been climbing the face of the rock; they now reached a small, ruined tower, through which their path led, and to which Spiagudry drew Ordener's attention.

"This is the Maläer postern, sir. This path hewn in the living rock contains several curious structures, which show the ancient style of fortification used in our Norwegian manor-houses. This postern, which was always guarded by four men-at-arms, was the first outwork of Vermund's fort. Speaking of posterns, the monk Ureusius makes an odd remark; he asks whether the word *janua*, derived from Janus, whose temple doors were so widely celebrated, has any connection with 'Janissary,' a name applied to the troops who guard the sultan's gate. It would be strange enough if the name of the mildest prince known to history should have passed to the most ferocious soldiers upon earth."

In the midst of all the keeper's scientific twaddle, they

journeyed laboriously along, over loose stones and sharp pebbles, mingled with the short, slippery grass which sometimes grows upon rocks. Ordener beguiled his weariness by thinking how delightful it would be to gaze once more upon distant Munkholm; all at once Spiagudry exclaimed: "Oh, I see it! This sight alone repays me for all my trouble. I see it, sir, I see it!"

"See what?" said Ordener, who was just then thinking of Ethel.

"Why, sir, the three-sided pyramid described by Schoenning. I shall be the third scientific man, with Professor Schoenning and Bishop Isleif, to have the pleasure of studying it. Only it is a great pity that there is no moon."

As they approached the famous boulder, Spiagudry uttered an exclamation of horror and distress. Ordener, in surprise, asked with some interest the cause of this new emotion; but the archæologist was for a time unable to reply.

"You thought," said Ordener, "that this rock blocked the path; on the contrary, you should be grateful to find that it leaves it entirely open."

"And that is the very thing which provokes me," said Benignus, in piteous accents.

"What do you mean?"

"Why, sir," replied the keeper, "do you not see that the position of the pyramid has been changed; that the base, which rested on the path, is now uppermost; and that the boulder stands upside down, upon the very side on which Schoenning discovered the primordial Runic letters? I am indeed unfortunate!"

"It is a pity," said the young man.

"And besides," hastily added Spiagudry, "the overturning of this mass of stone proves the presence of some superhuman being. Unless it be the work of the Devil, there is but one man in Norway whose arm could —"

"My poor guide, there you are, giving way again to your foolish fears. Who knows but this stone has lain thus for more than a hundred years?"

"It is a hundred and fifty years, it is true," said Spiagudry, more quietly, "since the last scientific man observed it. But it seems to me to have been moved recently; the place which it formerly occupied is still damp. Look, sir."

Ordener, impatient to reach the ruins, dragged his guide away from the marvellous pyramid, and succeeded, by gentle words, in removing the fresh fears with which this strange displacement inspired the aged scholar.

"See here, old man, you can take up your abode on the borders of this lake, and devote yourself to your important studies, when you get the thousand crowns reward for Hans's head."

"You are right, noble sir; but do not speak so lightly of so dubious a victory. I must give you one piece of advice which may help you to overcome the monster."

Ordener drew eagerly toward Spiagudry. "Advice! what is it?"

"The robber," said the latter, in a low voice, casting uneasy glances around him, — "the robber wears at his belt a skull, from which he usually drinks. It is the skull of his son, of the mutilation of whose corpse I am accused."

"Speak a little louder, and don't be frightened; I can hardly hear you. Well, this skull?"

"This skull," said Spiagudry, bending to whisper in the young man's ear, "you must try to obtain. The monster attaches a certain superstitious importance to its possession. His son's skull once yours, you can do what you will with him."

"That is all very well, my good fellow; but how am I to get this skull?"

"By some stratagem, sir. While the monster sleeps, perhaps."

Ordener interrupted him: "Enough. Your good advice is useless. I cannot be supposed to know when my enemy is asleep. My sword is the only weapon which I recognize."

"Sir, sir! it has never been proved that the archangel Michael did not resort to stratagem to vanquish Satan."

Here Spiagudry stopped short, and stretching out his hands, exclaimed in scarcely audible tones, "Oh, heavens! Oh, heavens! What do I see? Look, master; is not that a short man walking before us in the path?"

"Faith," said Ordener, raising his eyes, "I see nothing."

"Nothing, sir? To be sure, the path bends, and he has disappeared behind that rock. Go no farther, sir, I entreat you."

"Surely, if the person whom you imagine that you saw disappeared so quickly, it shows that he has no idea of waiting for us; and if he chooses to run away, that is no reason why we should do the same."

"Watch over us, holy Hospitius!" ejaculated Spiagudry,

who in all moments of danger remembered his favorite saint.

"You must," added Ordener, "have taken the flickering shadow of some startled owl for a man."

"And yet I really thought I saw a little man; to be sure, the moonlight often produces strange delusions. It was in the moonlight that Baldan, lord of Merneugh, took a white bed-curtain for his mother's ghost; which led him to go next day and confess himself guilty of parricide before the judges of Christiania, who were about to condemn the dead woman's innocent page. So we may say that the moonlight saved that page's life."

No one was ever more ready than Spiagudry to forget the present in the past. One anecdote from the vast storehouse of his memory was enough to banish all thought of the present. Thus the story of Baldan diverted his fears, and he added in a tranquil voice, "It is quite possible that the moonlight deceived me too."

Meantime, they gained the top of the Vulture's Neck, and began to get another glimpse of the ruins, which the steep slope of the rock had hidden from them as they ascended.

The reader need not be surprised if we frequently encounter ruins on the topmost peak of Norwegian mountains. No one who has travelled among the mountains of Europe can have failed to notice the remains of fortresses and castles clinging to the top of the loftiest peaks, like the deserted nest of a vulture or the eyrie of some dead eagle. In Norway especially, at the period of which we write, the variety of these aerial structures was

as amazing as their number. Sometimes they consisted of long dismantled walls, enclosing a rock, sometimes of slender pointed turrets, surmounting a sharp peak, like a crown; or upon the snowy summit of a lofty mountain might be seen great towers grouped about a massive donjon, looking in the distance like an antique diadem. Here were the graceful pointed arches of a Gothic cloister, side by side with the heavy Egyptian columns of a Saxon church; there, close by some pagan chieftain's citadel with its square towers, stood the crenellated fortress of a Christian lord; or, again, a stronghold crumbling with age, neighbored by a monastery ravaged by war. Of all these edifices — a strange medley of architectural styles, now almost forgotten, daringly constructed in apparently inaccessible spots — but a few ruins remained to bear witness alike to the power and the impotence of man. Within their walls deeds were perhaps done far worthier of repetition than all the stories which are written now; but time passed; the eyes which witnessed them are closed; the tradition of them died with the lapse of years, like a fire which is not fed; and when that is lost, who can read the secret of the ages?

The manor-house of Vermund the Refugee, which our two travellers had now reached, was one of those places about which popular superstition has woven endless amazing histories and marvellous legends. By its walls — composed of pebbles bedded in cement, now harder than stone — it was easy to determine that it was built about the fifth or sixth century. But one of its five towers remained standing; the other four, more or less dilapidated,

and strewing the top of the rock with broken fragments, were connected by a line of ruins, which also showed the ancient limits of the inner courts of the castle. It was very difficult to penetrate this enclosure, littered as it was with stones and shattered blocks of granite, and overgrown with weeds and brambles which, clambering from ruin to ruin, crowned the broken walls with verdure, or overhung the precipice with long, flexible branches. On these drooping tendrils, it was said, dim ghosts often swung in the moonlight,—the guilty spirits of those who had wilfully drowned themselves in Lake Sparbo; and to these twigs, too, the water-sprite fastened the cloud which was to bear him home again at sunrise. Fearful mysteries were these, more than once witnessed by hardy fishermen, when, to take advantage of the time when dogfish sleep,¹ they ventured to row as far as Oelme cliff, which loomed up in the darkness over their heads like the broken arch of some huge bridge.

Our two adventurers climbed the manor wall, though not without some difficulty, and crept through a crevice, for the door was filled with fragments. The only tower which, as we have said, remained standing, was at the extreme edge of the rock. It was, Spiagudry told Ordenor, from the top of this tower that Munkholm lighthouse could be seen. They went towards it, although the darkness was at that moment complete, the moon being hidden by a great black cloud. They were about to cross a breach in another wall, in order to enter what was

¹ The dogfish are greatly dreaded by fishermen, because they frighten other fish.

once the second courtyard of the castle, when Benignus stopped short, and suddenly seized Ordener's arm with such a trembling hand that the young man himself almost fell.

"What now?" asked Ordener in surprise.

Benignus, without answering, pressed his arm more firmly, as if begging him to be silent.

"Well —" said the young man.

Another pressure, accompanied by an ill-suppressed sigh, decided him to wait patiently until this fresh fright should cease.

At last Spiagudry asked, in a stifled voice: "Well, master, what do you say now?"

"To what?" said Ordener.

"Yes, sir," added the other, in the same tone; "I suppose you are sorry now that you came here?"

"No, indeed, my worthy guide; on the contrary, I hope to climb higher still. Why should you think that I am sorry?"

"What, sir, did you not see?"

"See! What?"

"You saw nothing?" repeated the honest keeper, with ever-increasing terror.

"Truly I did not," impatiently answered Ordener; "I saw nothing, and I heard nothing but the sound of your teeth chattering with fright."

"What! not behind that wall, in the shadow, those two flaming eyes, like comets, fixed directly upon us, — did you not see them?"

"Upon my honor, I did not."

"You did not see them move up and down, and then disappear among the ruins?"

"I don't know what you are talking about. Besides, what if I did see them?"

"What! Mr. Ordener, don't you know that there is but one man in Norway whose eyes gleam in that way in the dark?"

"Well, and what then? Who is this man with the eyes of a cat? Is it Hans, your much-dreaded Iclander? So much the better if he be here! It will spare us a journey to Walderhog."

This "so much the better" was not to the taste of Spiagudry, who could not help betraying his secret thought by the involuntary ejaculation: "Oh, sir, you promised to leave me at the village of Surb, a mile away from the battle."

The generous and kindly Ordener understood, and smiled.

"You are right, old man; it would be unfair to make you share my danger; therefore fear nothing. You see this Hans of Iceland everywhere. May there not be some wildcat lurking among these ruins, whose eyes shine quite as fiercely as his do?"

Once more Spiagudry's fears were set at rest, either because Ordener's suggestion struck him as very plausible, or because his young companion's composure proved contagious.

"Ah, sir," said he, "if it had not been for you I should have died a dozen deaths from fright as I climbed these rocks. To be sure, I should never have attempted such a task if it had not been for you."

The moon, which now broke through the clouds, showed them the gateway to the highest tower, the foot of which they had already reached. They entered, after raising a thick curtain of vines, which showered them with drowsy lizards and old decayed bird's-nests. The keeper picked up a couple of pebbles, and striking them together, produced a few sparks, by means of which he soon set fire to a heap of dead leaves and dry branches collected by Ordener. In a few moments a bright column of flame rose into the air, and banishing the darkness about them, permitted them to examine the interior of the tower.

Nothing was left but a circular wall, which was very thick, and was overgrown with moss and vines. The ceiling and floors of its four stories had crumbled away one after the other, and now formed a vast heap of rubbish upon the ground. A narrow spiral staircase, entirely without a railing, and broken in various places, was built in the wall, to the top of which it led. As the fire began to crackle cheerily, a swarm of owls and ospreys flew up heavily, with strange, weird cries, and huge bats now and then hovered above the flames, poised upon their ashen wings.

"Our hosts do not receive us very merrily," said Ordener; "but do not take fright again."

"I, sir," replied Spiagudry, seating himself close to the fire; "I fear an owl or a bat! I have dwelt with corpses, and I do not fear vampires. Ah, I only dread the living! I am not brave, I admit; but at least I am not superstitious. Come, sir, take my advice; let us laugh at these

ladies in black petticoats and with such hoarse voices, and let us be thinking of supper."

Ordener thought of nothing but Munkholm.

"I have here a few provisions," said Spiagudry, drawing his knapsack from under his cloak; "but if your appetite be as good as mine, this black bread and mouldy cheese will not go far. I see that we shall have to observe the limits of the law laid down by the French king, Philip the Fair, — *Nemo audeat comedere præter duo fercula cum potagio*. There must be nests of gulls or pheasants on the top of this tower; but how are we to get there by that dilapidated staircase, which does not look as if it would bear the weight of anything but a sylph?"

"Still," answered Ordener, "it must needs bear mine, for I shall certainly climb to the top of this tower."

"What, master! to get a few gull's-nests? Do not, for mercy's sake, be so rash! It is not worth while to kill yourself for the sake of a better supper. Besides, suppose you should make a mistake and take the nests of these owls?"

"Much I care for your nests! Didn't you tell me that I could see Munkholm light from the top of this tower?"

"So you can, young master; it lies to the south. I see that your desire to establish this point, so important to the science of geography, was your motive for taking this fatiguing journey to Vermund castle. But do consider, good Mr. Ordener, that it may sometimes be the duty of a zealous student to brave toil and hardship, but

never to run into danger. I implore you, do not attempt that poor broken-down staircase, upon which even a crow would not venture to perch."

Benignus was by no means anxious to be left alone in the tower. As he rose to take Ordener's hand, his knapsack, which was lying across his knees, fell upon some stones, and gave forth a clear metallic ring.

"What have you in your wallet that rings so loudly?" asked Ordener.

This was such a delicate question that Spiagudry lost all desire to restrain his young companion.

"Well," said he, without answering the question, "if, in spite of all my prayers, you persist in climbing to the top of this tower, at least beware of the broken places in the stairs."

"But," repeated Ordener, "you have not told me what you have in your knapsack to make it sound so metallic."

This indiscreet persistence was extremely unpleasant to the old keeper, who cursed the questioner from the bottom of his soul.

"Oh, noble master," he replied, "how can you show such curiosity about a paltry iron barber's-basin, which clinked against a stone? If I cannot persuade you to change your mind," he made haste to add, "come back as soon as you can, and be careful to hold fast to the vines which cover the wall. You will see Munkholm lighthouse to the south, between Frigga's Footstools."

Spiagudry could not have said anything better calculated to drive every other idea out of the young man's

head. Ordener, throwing aside his mantle, sprang toward the staircase, up which the keeper followed him with his eyes until he could only see him move like a faint shadow upward to the top of the wall, dimly lighted by the flickering flames and the cold rays of the moon.

Then reseating himself and picking up his knapsack, he said: "Now, my dear Benignus Spiagudry, while that young lynx cannot see you, and you are alone, make haste and break the cumbrous iron envelope which prevents you from taking possession, *oculis et manu*, of the treasure undoubtedly contained in this casket. When it is delivered from its prison, it will be lighter to carry and easier to conceal."

Arming himself with a huge stone, he was about to break the lid of the box, when the firelight, falling on the iron lock, suddenly arrested the antiquarian.

"By Saint Willibrod the Numismatologist, I am not mistaken," he exclaimed, eagerly rubbing the rusty lid; "those are indeed the arms of Griffenfeld. I came near doing a very foolish thing in breaking this lock. This may be the only perfect copy in existence of those famous armorial bearings destroyed in 1676 by the hangman's hand. The devil! I will not touch this box. Whatever may be the value of its contents, unless, as seems scarcely probable, it should be coin of Palmyra or Carthaginian money, this is certainly still more precious. So here I am the sole owner of the now obsolete arms of Griffenfeld! Let me hide this treasure carefully, and I may some time discover the secret of opening the casket without committing an act of vandalism. The Griffenfeld arms! Oh,

yes! here are the hand of Justice and the scales upon a gules ground. What luck!"

At each fresh heraldic discovery that he made as he polished the ancient coffer, he uttered a cry of admiration or an exclamation of content.

"By means of a solvent, I can open the box without breaking the lock. It probably contains the ex-chancellor's treasure. If any one, tempted by the bait of the four crowns offered by the council for my head, should recognize me now and stop me, I can readily buy my freedom. So this blessed casket will save me."

As he spoke, he looked up mechanically. All at once his grotesque features changed with lightning speed from an expression of intense delight to that of stupefied dismay; his limbs trembled convulsively, his eyes became fixed, his brow furrowed, his mouth gaped wide, and his voice stuck in his throat.

Before him, on the other side of the fire, stood a little man with folded arms. By his dress of blood-stained skins, his stone axe, his red beard, and the ravenous stare fastened on his face, the wretched keeper at once recognized the frightful character whose last visit he had received in the Spladgest at Throndhjem.

"It is I!" said the little man, with terrible calmness. "That casket will save you," he added with a bitterly sarcastic smile. "Spiagudry, is this the way to Thoctree?"

The unfortunate man tried to stammer a word of excuse.

"Thoctree! Sir — My lord and master, — I was going —"

"You were going to Walderhog," replied the other, in a voice of thunder.

The terrified Spiagudry mustered all his forces to deny the charge.

"You were guiding an enemy to my retreat. I thank you! 'T will be one living man the less. Fear nothing, faithful guide; he shall follow you."

The luckless keeper strove to shriek, but could with difficulty utter a feeble moan.

"Why are you so frightened at my presence? You were seeking me. Hark ye! Do not speak, or you are a dead man."

The little man swung his stone axe above the keeper's head. He added, in a voice which sounded like the roar of a mountain torrent as it bursts from some subterranean cave: "You have betrayed me."

"No, your Grace! No, your Excellency!" gasped Benignus, scarcely able to articulate these words of apology and entreaty.

The other gave vent to a low growl.

"Ah! you would deceive me again! Hope not to succeed. Listen! I was on the roof of the Spladgest when you sealed your compact with that mad fool; twice you have heard my voice. It was my voice you heard amid the storm upon your road; it was I whom you met in Vygla tower; it was I who said, 'We shall meet again!'"

The terrified keeper looked about him in despair, as if to summon help. The little man went on: "I could not let those soldiers who pursued you, escape my wrath; they belonged to the Munkholm regiment. I knew that

I should not lose you. Spiagudry, it was I whom you saw again in Öëlmœ village beneath the miner's hat; it was my footstep and my voice that you heard, and my eyes that you saw as you climbed to these ruins. It was I!"

Alas! the unfortunate man was but too well convinced of these dreadful truths. He rolled upon the ground at the feet of his fearful judge, crying in faint and agonizing accents, "Mercy!"

The little man, his arms still folded, fixed upon him a murderous look, more scorching even than the flames upon the hearth.

"Ask that casket to save you, as you said it would do," he said sarcastically.

"Mercy, sir, mercy!" repeated the expiring victim.

"I warned you to be faithful and to be dumb. You have not been faithful; but in future I protest that you shall be dumb."

The keeper, grasping the horrible meaning of these words, uttered a deep groan.

"Fear nothing," said the man; "I will not part you from your treasure."

At these words, unfastening his leather belt, he passed it through a ring on the cover of the casket, and by this means hung it about Spiagudry's neck, the poor fellow bending beneath its weight.

"Come!" rejoined the monster, "to what devil will you confide your soul? Make haste and summon him, lest another demon whom you do not care about, take possession of it before him."

The desperate old man, past all power of speech, fell at the little man's knees, making countless gestures of terror and entreaty.

"No, no!" said his tormentor; "my faithful Spiagudry, you need not be distressed at leaving your young companion without a guide. I promise you that he shall go where you go. Follow me; you do but show him the way. Come!"

With these words, seizing the wretched man in his powerful arms, he bore him from the tower as a tiger might carry off a writhing serpent, and a moment later a fearful shriek rang through the ruins, mingled with a horrible burst of laughter.



XXIII.

Yes, we may reveal to the faithful lover's tear-wet eye the distant object of his adoration. But alas ! the moments of expectation, the farewells, the thoughts, the sweet and bitter memories, the enchanting dreams of two beings that love ! Who can restore these ? — MATURIN: *Bertram*.

MEANTIME the venturesome Ordener, after a score or more of narrow escapes from a fall during his perilous ascent, reached the top of the thick, round tower wall. At his unexpected visit, dusky old owls abruptly aroused from their nests, flew up, staring at him as they sailed away, and loose stones, displaced by his tread, rolled into the abyss, rebounding from projections in the masonry with a remote, hollow roar.

At any other time, Ordener's gaze would have roamed far and wide, and his mind would have dwelt upon the depth of the gulf yawning beneath him, which seemed even greater from the thick darkness of the night. His

eye, taking in all the great masses of shadow on the horizon, their sombre outlines but half revealed by a nebulous moon, would have striven to distinguish between mist and rocks, between mountains and clouds; his imagination would have lent life to all the gigantic forms, the fantastic shapes with which moonlight clothes hills and vapors. He would have listened to the indistinct murmur of lake and woods blended with the shrill sough of the wind through the crevices in the stones and through the dried grass at his feet, and his fancy would have lent words to all those low voices through which material Nature speaks while man sleeps, in the silence of the night. But although the scene unconsciously acted upon his whole being, other thoughts filled his mind. Hardly had his foot touched the top of the wall, when his eye turned to the southern sky, and he thrilled with unspeakable rapture as he saw beyond and between two small mountains a point of light gleaming upon the horizon like a red star. It was Munkholm beacon.

None but those who have tasted the truest joys which life can give can understand the young man's happiness. His soul was filled with delight; his heart beat violently. Motionless, his eye fixed, he gazed at the star of hope and consolation. It seemed as if that beam of light traversing the darkness, and coming from the spot which held all that made life worth living, bore with it something of his Ethel. Ah! do not doubt it; one soul may sometimes hold mysterious communion with another, though widely parted by time and space. In vain the world of

reality rears its barriers between two beings who love; inhabitants of an ideal world, they are present to each other in absence, they are united in death. What can mere bodily separation or physical distance avail if two hearts be indissolubly bound by a single thought and a common desire? True love may suffer, but it cannot die.

Who has not repeatedly lingered on a rainy night beneath some dimly lighted window? Who has not passed and repassed a certain door, rapturously wandered up and down before a certain house? Who has not abruptly retraced his steps, to follow, at evening, along some deserted, winding street, a floating skirt or a white veil suddenly recognized in the twilight? He who has never experienced these feelings may safely say that he has never loved.

As he gazed at the distant lighthouse, Ordener pondered. A sad and ironical contentment took the place of his first transports; a thousand varying thoughts and ideas crowded upon his agitated spirit. "Yes," said he, "a man must labor long and painfully to win at last a ray of happiness in the vast night of existence. So she is there! She sleeps, she dreams, perhaps she thinks of me! But who will tell her that her Ordener even now hangs above an abyss, sad and lonely, surrounded by darkness,—her Ordener, who retains nothing of her but a single ringlet pressed to his heart and a faint light upon the horizon!" Then, looking at the ruddy glow of the huge fire burning in the tower beneath, and escaping through the crevices in the wall, he murmured: "Perhaps

from one of her prison windows she casts an indifferent glance at the far-off flame upon this hearth."

All at once, a loud shriek and a prolonged burst of laughter rose from the brink of the precipice below ; he turned abruptly, and saw that the interior of the tower was vacant. Alarmed for the safety of the old man, he hurriedly descended ; but he had taken but a few steps when he heard a dull splash, as if a heavy body had been thrown into the deep waters of the lake.



XXIV.

Count Don Sancho Diaz, lord of Saldana, shed bitter tears in his prison cell. Full of despair, he sighed forth in solitude his complaints against King Alfonso: "Oh, sad moments, when my white locks remind me how many years I have already passed in this horrible prison!" — *Old Spanish Romance.*

THE sun was setting, and its horizontal beams threw the dark shadow of the prison-bars upon Schumacker's woollen gown and Ethel's crape dress, as they sat by the high-arched casement, the old man in a great Gothic chair, the young girl upon a stool at his feet. The prisoner seemed to be brooding, in his favorite melancholy attitude. His bald, wrinkled brow rested on his hand, and his face was hidden save for the long white beard which hung down his breast in sad disorder.

"Father," said Ethel, trying by every means to rouse him, "my lord and father, I dreamed last night of a happy

future. Look, dear father; raise your eyes, and see that bright, cloudless sky."

"I can only see the sky," the old man replied, "through my prison-bars, as I can only see your future, Ethel, through my misfortunes."

Then his head, for an instant lifted, fell back upon his hands, and both were silent.

"Father," rejoined the young girl, a moment later, in a timid voice, "are you thinking of Lord Ordener?"

"Ordener?" said the old man, as if striving to recall the name. "Ah, I know whom you mean! What of him?"

"Do you think that he will soon return, father? He has been gone so long!—this is the fourth day."

The old man shook his head sadly.

"I think that when four years have passed, his return will be as close at hand as it is to-day."

Ethel turned pale.

"Heavens! Then you think that he will not come back?"

Schumacker made no answer. The young girl repeated her question in an anxious and beseeching tone.

"Did he not promise to return?" said the old man, curtly.

"Yes, to be sure!" eagerly answered Ethel.

"Well, how can you reckon upon his coming, then? Is he not a man? I believe that the vulture will return to a dead body, but I have no faith in the return of spring when the year is on the wane."

Ethel, seeing that her father had relapsed into his

wonted melancholy, took courage; the voice of her young and virginal soul proudly denied the old man's morbid philosophy.

"Father," she said firmly, "Lord Ordener will return; he is not like other men."

"What do you know about it, girl?"

"What you know yourself, my lord and father."

"I know nothing," said the old man. "I heard words from a man, and they promised the actions of a god." Then he added, with a bitter smile: "I have weighed them well, and I see that they are too beautiful to be true."

"And I, sir, believe them because they are so beautiful."

"Oh, girl, if you were what you should be, Countess of Tönsberg and Princess of Wollin, surrounded, as you would be, by a swarm of handsome traitors and selfish adorers, such credulity would be most dangerous."

"It is not credulity, my lord and father, but confidence."

"It is easy to see, Ethel, that there is French blood in your veins."

This idea led the old man, by an imperceptible transition, to a different train of thought, and he added, with a certain complacency:—

"For those who degraded your father to a point lower yet than that from which he had raised himself, cannot deny that you are the daughter of Charlotte, Princess of Tarentum, or that one of your ancestresses was Adela (or Edila), Countess of Flanders, whose name you bear."

Ethel's mind was running on quite other things.

"Father, you misjudge the noble Ordener."

"Noble, my daughter! What do you mean by that? I have made men noble who proved themselves very vile."

"I do not mean, sir, that his nobility is of the kind conferred by man."

"Do you know that he is descended from some 'jarl' or 'hersa'?"¹

"I know as little of his descent as you do, father. He may be," she added, with downcast eyes, "the son of a vassal or a serf. Alas! crowns and lyres may be painted upon the velvet covering of a footstool. I only mean that, judged by your own standard, my revered sire, he has a noble heart."

Of all the men whom she had seen, Ordener was the one whom Ethel knew at once best and least. He had dawned upon her destiny, like one of those angels who visited the first men, wrapped alike in mystery and in radiant light. Their mere presence revealed their nature, and they were at once adored. Thus Ordener had shown Ethel what men usually conceal, his heart; he had been silent concerning that of which they usually make boast, his country and his family. His look was enough for Ethel, and she had faith in his words. She loved him, she had given him her life, she was intimate with his soul, and she did not know his name.

¹ The ancient aristocracy of Norway, before Griffenfeld established a regular order of nobility, were entitled "hersa" (baron) or "jarl" (count). The English word "earl" is derived from the latter.

"A noble heart!" repeated the old man; a noble heart! Such nobility is higher than any in the gift of kings; it is the gift of God. He is less lavish with it than are they."

The prisoner raised his eyes to his shattered escutcheon as he added: "And he never withdraws it."

"Then, father," said the girl, "he who retains the one should be easily consoled for the loss of the other."

These words startled her father and restored his courage. He replied in a firm voice:—

"You are right, girl. But you do not know that the disgrace held by the world to be unjust is sometimes confirmed by our secret conscience. Such is our poor nature; once unhappy, countless voices which slumbered in the time of our prosperity wake within us and accuse us of faults and errors before unnoted."

"Say not so, illustrious father," said Ethel, deeply moved; for by the old man's altered voice, she felt that he had allowed the secret source of one of his greatest sorrows to escape him.

She raised her eyes to his face, and kissing his pallid, withered hand, she added gently: "You are severe in your judgment of two noble men, Lord Ordener and yourself, my revered father."

"You decide lightly, Ethel. One would say that you did not know that life is a serious matter."

"Am I wrong then, sir, to do justice to the generous Ordener?"

Schumacker frowned, with a dissatisfied air.

"I cannot approve, my daughter, of such admiration for a stranger whom you may never see again."

"Oh," said the young girl, upon whose soul these cold words fell like a heavy weight, "do not believe it. We shall see him again. Was it not for your sake that he went forth to brave such danger?"

"Like yourself, I confess that I was at first deceived by his promises. But no; he will never go upon his mission, and therefore he will never return to us."

"He did go, sir; he did go."

The tone in which the young girl pronounced these words was almost that of one offended and insulted. She felt herself outraged in her Ordener's person. Alas! she was only too sure in her own soul of the truth which she asserted.

The prisoner replied, seemingly unmoved: "Very well. If he has really gone to fight that brigand, if he has rushed into such danger, it comes to the same thing,—he will never return."

Poor Ethel! how often a word indifferently uttered, painfully galls the hidden wound in an anxious and tortured heart! She bent her pale face to hide from her father's stern gaze the tears which, in spite of all her efforts, fell from her burning eyes.

"Oh, father," she sighed, "while you speak thus, this noble and unfortunate youth may be dying for your sake!"

The aged minister shook his head doubtfully.

"That I can neither believe nor wish. And even so, how am I to blame? I should merely show myself

ungrateful to the young man, as so many others have shown themselves to me."

A deep sigh was Ethel's only answer; and Schumacker, turning to his table, tore up with an absent air a few leaves of "Plutarch's Lives," which volume lay before him, already tattered in countless places, and covered with marginal notes. A moment later the door opened, and Schumacker, without looking up, cried out as usual: "Do not enter! do not disturb me! I will see no one!"

"It is his Excellency the governor," was the answer.

An elderly man dressed in the uniform of a general, with the collars of the Elephant, the Dannebrog, and the Golden Fleece about his neck, advanced toward Schumacker, who half rose, muttering, "The governor! the governor!" The general bowed respectfully to Ethel, as she stood at her father's side, timidly and anxiously watching him.

Perhaps before proceeding further, it will be well briefly to recall the motives of General Levin's visit to Munkholm. The reader will remember the unpleasant news which disturbed the old governor, in the twentieth chapter of this truthful narrative. On receiving it, he at once saw the importance of questioning Schumacker; but he was extremely reluctant to do so. The idea of tormenting a poor prisoner, already a prey to so much that was painful, and whom he had known in his days of power, of severely scanning the secrets of an unfortunate man, even if guilty, was most unpleasant to his kind and generous soul. Still, his duty to the king required it. He ought

not to leave Throndhjem without such fresh light as might be gained by questioning the apparent author of the rebellion among the miners. Accordingly, the night before his departure, after a long and confidential talk with Countess d'Ahlefeld, the governor made up his mind to visit the prisoner. As he approached the fortress, thoughts of the interests of the State, of the advantage to which his many personal enemies might turn what they would style his negligence, and perhaps too the crafty words of the chancellor's wife, worked within him, and confirmed him in his purpose. He therefore climbed to the Lion of Schleswig tower with every intention to be severe; he resolved to bear himself toward Schumacker the conspirator as if he had never known Griffenfeld the chancellor, — to cast aside all his memories, and even his natural disposition, and to speak as a firm judge to this former fellow-sharer in the royal favor.

So soon, however, as he entered the ex-chancellor's apartment, the old man's venerable though sombre face made a strong impression upon him; Ethel's sweet though dignified expression touched him; and with his first glance at the two prisoners, his stern intentions died within him.

He advanced toward the fallen minister, and involuntarily offered him his hand, saying, without remarking that his politeness met with no response: —

"How are you, Count Griffenf—" His old habit overcame him for the moment; then he corrected himself quickly — "Mr. Schumacker?" With this he paused, satisfied and exhausted by such an effort.

Silence ensued. The general racked his brain to find words harsh enough to correspond with this brutal beginning.

"Well," Schumacker said at last, "are you the governor of the province of Throndhjem?"

The governor, somewhat surprised to find himself questioned by the man he had meant to question, bowed his head.

"Then," added the prisoner, "I have a complaint to lay before you."

"A complaint! What is it? what is it?" And the kind-hearted Levin's countenance assumed a look of interest.

Schumacker went on, in a tone of considerable annoyance: "By order of the viceroy I am to be left free and undisturbed in this donjon."

"I am aware of the order."

"And yet, Governor, I am importuned and annoyed by visits."

"Visits! and from whom?" cried the general; "tell me who dares —"

"You, Governor."

These words, uttered in a haughty tone, offended the general. He answered, in a somewhat irritated voice: "You forget that my power knows no limits when it is a question of serving the king."

"Unless," said Schumacker, "it were those of the respect due to misfortune. But men know nothing of that."

The ex-chancellor said this as if speaking to himself. The governor heard him.

"Yes, indeed! yes, indeed! I was wrong, Count Griff-Mr. Schumacker, I should say; I should leave the privilege of anger to you, since the power is mine."

Schumacker was silent for a moment. "There is," he resumed thoughtfully, "something about your face and voice, Governor, which reminds me of a man I once knew. It was very long ago. No one but myself can remember those days. It was in the time of my prosperity. He was one Levin de Knud, of Mecklenburg. Did you ever know the foolish fellow?"

"I knew him," quietly replied the general.

"Oh, you remember him! I thought it was only in adversity that we remembered."

"Was he not a captain in the Royal Guards?" added the governor.

"Yes, a mere captain, although the king loved him dearly. But he thought of nothing but pleasure, and seemed to have no ambition. He was a strange, mad fellow. Can you conceive that a favorite could be so moderate in his desires?"

"I can understand it."

"I was fond of this Levin de Knud, because he never gave me any alarm. He was the king's friend as he might have been the friend of any other man. It seemed as if he loved him for his own sake, and not for his position."

The general would have interrupted Schumacker; but the latter persisted, either from a spirit of contradiction, or because the train of thought into which he had drifted really pleased him.

"Since you knew this Captain Levin, Governor, you probably know that he had a son who died young. But do you remember what happened at the birth of this son?"

"I can better recall what occurred at the time of his death," said the general, covering his eyes with his hand, and in a faltering voice.

"But," continued the heedless Schumacker, "this fact was known to very few persons, and it will show you just how peculiar this Levin was. The king wished to be the child's godfather; would you believe that Levin refused? He did more; he chose an old beggar who hung about the palace gates, to hold his son at the baptismal font. I never could understand the reason for such an act of lunacy."

"I will tell you," replied the general. "In choosing a guardian for his son's soul, this Captain Levin doubtless thought that a poor man had more influence with God than a king."

Schumacker considered for a moment, then said: "You are right."

The governor again attempted to turn the conversation to the object of his visit. But Schumacker cut him short.

"Excuse me; if it be true that you know this Levin of Mecklenburg, let me talk of him. Of all the men whom I knew in the days of my grandeur, he is the only one whose memory does not inspire me with disgust or horror. Although he carried his peculiarity to the verge of folly, his noble qualities, none the less, made him one man in a thousand."

"I do not agree with you. This Levin was no better than other men. In fact, there are many who are better."

Schumacker folded his arms, and raised his eyes to heaven. "Yes, that is the way with them all. You cannot praise a worthy man in their presence, that they do not instantly seek to disparage him. They poison everything, even the pleasure of just praise, rare as it is."

"If you knew me, you would not accuse me of disparaging Gener— I mean, Captain Levin."

"Nonsense! nonsense," said the prisoner; "for loyalty and generosity, there were never two men like this Levin de Knud, and to say a word to the contrary is both an outrageous slander and a flattery of this miserable human race."

"I assure you," returned the general, trying to assuage Schumacker's wrath, "that I have not the slightest intention of wronging Levin de Knud."

"Do not say that. Although he was so foolish, the rest of mankind is anything but like him. They are a false, ungrateful, envious set of slanderers. Do you know that Levin de Knud gave more than half his income to the Copenhagen hospitals?"

"I did not know that you knew it."

"There it is!" triumphantly exclaimed the old man. "You thought that you could safely brand him, trusting to my ignorance of the poor fellow's good deeds!"

"Not at all, not at all!"

"Do you suppose, too, that I don't know that he persuaded the king to give the regiment which he intended for him, to an officer who had wounded him in a duel, because, he said, the other outranked him?"

"I thought that transaction was a secret."

"Well, tell me, Governor of Throndhjem, does that make it any less beautiful? If Levin concealed his virtues, is that a reason for denying them? Oh, how much alike men are! How dare you compare the noble Levin with them,—he who, when he could not save a soldier convicted of an attempt to murder him, settled a pension upon his murderer's widow?"

"Pooh! who would not do as much?"

Here Schumacker exploded. "Who? You! I! Any other man, Sir Governor! Because you wear the showy uniform of a general, and stars and crosses on your breast, do you think yourself a very meritorious person? You are a general, and poor Levin, I dare say, died a captain. True, he was a foolish fellow, and never thought of promotion."

"If he did not think of it himself, the king in his goodness thought of it for him."

"Goodness? Say, rather, justice, if there be such a thing as the justice of a king! Well, what signal reward did he receive?"

"His Majesty paid Levin de Knud far beyond his deserts."

"Capital!" cried the aged minister, clapping his hands. "A faithful captain is perhaps, after thirty years' service, made a major; and this distinguished mark of favor offends you, noble general? The Persian proverb is true which says that the setting sun is jealous of the rising moon."

Schumacker's fury was so great that the general could scarcely get in the words: "If you persist in interrupting me — You will not let me explain —"

"No, no!" continued the other; "I thought at first sight, General, that I caught a certain likeness between you and my good Levin; but no! there is none."

"Do but listen to me —"

"Listen to you! and hear you say that Levin de Knud is unworthy of some trifling reward?"

"I swear it is not —"

"You will presently — I know you men — try to persuade me that he is a knave, a hypocrite, and a villain, like the rest of you."

"No, indeed!"

"How do I know? Or perhaps that he betrayed a friend, persecuted a benefactor, as you all do; or poisoned his father, or murdered his mother?"

"You are mistaken. I have not the slightest desire —"

"Do you know that it was he who compelled Vice-chancellor Wind, as well as Scheele, Vinding, and Justice Lasson, three of my judges, not to sentence me to death? And you would have me hear him calumniated, and not defend him! Yes, that is what he did for me, and yet I had always done him more harm than good; for I am like you, vile and wicked."

The noble Levin was strangely moved by this singular interview. The object alike of the most direct insults and the sincerest praise, he knew not how to take such rough compliments and such flattering abuse. He was shocked and touched. Now he wanted to get into a passion, and now to thank Schumacker. Present and yet unknown, he loved to hear the fierce Schumacker defend in him, and against him, a friend and an absent man; only he would

have preferred that his advocate should put a trifle less bitterness and acrimony into his panegyric. But in his innermost heart the exaggerated praise bestowed on Captain Levin pleased him even more than the insults addressed to the governor of Thronthjem wounded him. Fixing his kindly gaze upon the favorite in disgrace, he allowed him to vent his gratitude and his wrath; until at last, after a prolonged invective against human ingratitude, he sank exhausted upon an arm-chair, into the trembling Ethel's arms, saying in a melancholy voice: "Oh, men! what have I done that I should be forced to know you?"

The general had not yet been able to broach the important topic of his visit to Munkholm. All his reluctance to torment the captive by a series of questions, revived; to his pity and emotion were added two powerful motives: Schumacker's present state of agitation made it improbable that he could answer satisfactorily; and, moreover, on considering the affair more closely, it did not seem to the trusting Levin that such a man could be a conspirator. Still, how could he leave Thronthjem without examining Schumacker? This disagreeable necessity of his position as governor once more overcame all his scruples, and he began as follows, softening his voice as much as possible: "Pray, calm your excitement, Count Schumacker."

This compromise struck the good governor as a happy inspiration, well fitted to reconcile the respect due to the sentence pronounced against him, with a proper regard for the prisoner's misfortune, as it combined his noble title and his humble cognomen. He added: "It is my painful duty —"

"First," interrupted the prisoner, "allow me, Governor, to return to a subject which interests me far more than anything that your Excellency can have to say to me. You assured me just now that that madcap Levin had been rewarded for his services. I am most anxious to know in what way."

"His Majesty, my lord Griffenfeld, raised Levin to the rank of general, and for more than twenty years the foolish fellow has grown old in peace, honored with this military dignity and the favor of his king."

Schumacker's head drooped.

"Yes; that foolish Levin, who cared so little whether he ever lived to be more than a captain, will die a general; and the wise Schumacker, who expected to die Lord Chancellor, grows old a prisoner of State."

As he uttered these words, he hid his face in his hands and heaved a deep sigh. Ethel, who understood nothing of the conversation, save that it distressed her father, instantly strove to divert him.

"Look yonder, father, to the north; I see a gleam of light which I never noticed before."

In fact, the night, which had now closed in, revealed a faint and distant light upon the horizon, apparently coming from some far-off mountain. But Schumacker's mind and eye were not, like those of Ethel, ever bent on the north; therefore he made no reply. The general alone was struck by the young girl's remark.

"It may be," thought he, "a fire kindled by the rebels;" and this idea forcibly reminding him of the purpose of his visit, he thus addressed the prisoner: "Mr.

Griffenfeld, I am sorry to distress you, but you must allow me — ”

“ I understand you, Governor ; it is not enough to spend my days in this dungeon, to lead a lonely, disgraced existence, to have nothing left but bitter memories of past grandeur and power, you must also intrude upon my solitude, gaze upon my sorrow, and enjoy my misfortune. Since that noble Levin de Knud, whom some of your outward features recall to me, is a general like yourself, why was not he permitted to fill your post ; for he would never, I swear, Sir Governor, have come to torture a miserable prisoner.”

During the course of this strange interview the general had more than once been on the point of revealing himself, that he might bring it to a close. This indirect reproach made it impossible ; it accorded so well with his secret feelings that it almost made him feel ashamed of himself. Still, he tried to answer Schumacker's injurious charge. Strange to say, from their mere difference of character, the two men had mutually changed their position ; the judge was in some sort obliged to justify himself to the prisoner.

“ But,” said the general, “ if his duty compelled him, do not doubt that Levin de Knud — ”

“ I do doubt it, noble Governor,” exclaimed Schumacker ; “ do not doubt in your turn that he would have rejected, with all the generous indignation of his soul, the office of spy, or of increasing the agony of a wretched prisoner ! No, I know him better than you ; he would never have accepted the duties of an executioner. Now, General,

I am at your service; do what you consider your duty. What does your Excellency require of me?"

And the old minister fixed his haughty gaze upon the governor, all whose resolution was gone. His first reluctance had returned, and was not to be overcome.

"He is right," thought he; "why should I torture an unfortunate man upon mere suspicion? Let some one else undertake the task!"

The effect of these reflections was prompt; he walked up to the astonished Schumacker and pressed his hand. Then he hurriedly left the room, saying: "Count Schumacker, always preserve the same esteem for Levin de Knud."



XXV.

Lion (roaring). Oh —

Demetrius. Well roared, lion !

SHAKESPEARE : *Midsummer Night's Dream*.

THE traveller of the present day who visits the snow-clad mountains which surround Lake Mïösen like a white girdle, will scarcely find a vestige of what Norwegians of the seventeenth century knew as Arbar ruin. No one was ever able to decide the architectural period or the purpose for which this ruin, if we may give it the name, was built. As you left the forest which covered the southern shore of the lake, after climbing a slope crowned with here and there a fragment of wall or a bit of masonry once a tower, you reached an arched opening leading into the side of the mountain. This entrance, now completely closed by landslips, led into a

species of gallery cut in the living rock, and piercing the mountain from side to side.

This tunnel, dimly lighted by conical air-holes made in the arched roof at regular intervals, ended in an oval hall in part excavated from the rock, and terminating in a cyclopean stone wall. Around this hall, in deep niches, were rude images carved from granite. Some of these mysterious figures, which had fallen from their pedestals, lay heaped in confusion on the ground with other shapeless rubbish, covered with grass and weeds, among which crawled lizards, spiders, and all the hideous vermin born of damp earth and ruins.

Daylight penetrated to this place only through a door opposite the mouth of the gallery. This door, viewed in a certain light, was seen to be of pointed construction, of no especial date, and evidently the work of the architect's whim.

This door might as well have been styled a window, although it was on a level with the ground, for it opened upon a fearful precipice; and it was impossible to imagine whither a short flight of stairs which overhung the abyss could possibly lead.

The hall formed the interior of a huge turret which from a distance, seen from the other side of the precipice, looked like any high mountain peak. It stood alone, and, as has already been said, no one knew to what sort of structure it had belonged. Above it, however, upon a plateau inaccessible even to the boldest hunter, was a mass of masonry which might be taken, being so remote, either for a rounded rock or for the remains of a colossal arch. This

turret and crumbling arch were known to the peasants as Arbar ruin, the origin of the name being fully as obscure as that of the buildings themselves.

On a stone in the centre of this oval hall sat a little man dressed in the skins of wild beasts, whom we have already had occasion to mention several times in the course of our story.

His back was turned to the light, or rather to the faint twilight which filtered into the gloomy turret when the sun reached high noon. This light, the strongest natural light which ever entered the tower, was not sufficient to reveal the nature of the object over which the little man was stooping. An occasional muffled groan was heard, and it seemed to proceed from this object, judging by the feeble movement which it now and then made. Sometimes the little man straightened himself, and raised to his lips a cup, by its form apparently a human skull, filled with steaming liquid of some indistinguishable hue, and drank deep draughts.

All at once he started up.

"I hear steps in the gallery, I believe; can it be the chancellor of the two kingdoms already?"

These words were followed by a horrible burst of laughter ending in a savage roar, which met with an instant response in a howl from the gallery.

"Oh, ho!" rejoined the lord of Arbar ruin; "it is not a man. But it is an enemy all the same; it is a wolf."

In fact, a huge wolf suddenly emerged from the vaulted gallery, paused a moment, then advanced stealthily toward the man, crouching to the ground and fixing upon him

burning eyes which gleamed through the darkness. The man stood with folded arms, and watched him.

"Ah! 't is the old gray wolf, — the oldest wolf in Miösen woods! Good-morning, wolf; your eyes glitter; you are hungry, and the smell of dead bodies attracts you. You too shall soon attract other hungry wolves. Welcome, wolf of Miösen; I have always longed to make your acquaintance. You are so old that they say you cannot die; they will not say so to-morrow."

The animal answered with a frightful yell, sprang back, and then bounded upon the little man.

He did not budge an inch. As quick as a flash, with his right arm he grasped the body of the wolf, which, standing on two legs before him, had thrown his fore-paws upon his shoulders; with his left hand he guarded his face from the gaping jaws of his enemy, seizing it by the throat with such force that the creature, compelled to raise his head, could scarcely utter a sound.

"Wolf of Miösen," said the triumphant man, "you tear my jerkin, but your skin shall replace it."

As he mingled with these words of victory a few words in a strange jargon, a convulsive movement made by the dying wolf caused him to stumble upon the stones which were thickly strewn over the floor. The two fell together, and the roars of the man were blended with the howls of the beast.

Obliged in his fall to relax his grasp of the wolf's throat, the man felt the sharp teeth buried in his shoulder, when, as they rolled over one another, the two combatants struck against an enormous shaggy white body

lying in the darkest corner of the room. It was a bear, who waked from his heavy sleep with a growl.

No sooner were the drowsy eyes of this new-comer opened wide enough to see the fight, than he rushed furiously, not upon the man, but upon the wolf, just then victorious in his turn, seized him violently by the back, and thus freed the human combatant.

This latter, far from showing any gratitude for so great a service, rose, covered with blood, and springing upon the bear, gave him a vigorous kick, such as a master might bestow on a dog guilty of some misdemeanor.

"Friend, who called you? Why do you meddle?"

These words were interspersed with furious ejaculations and gnashing of teeth.

"Begone!" he added with a roar.

The bear, who had received at one and the same time a kick from the man and a bite from the wolf, uttered a plaintive remonstrance; then, hanging his great head, he released the famished beast, who hurled himself upon the man with fresh fury.

While the struggle was renewed, the rebuffed bear went back to his couch, sat gravely down, and gazed indifferently at the two raging adversaries, preserving the utmost silence, and rubbing first one fore-paw and then the other across the tip of his white nose.

But the small man, as the leader of the Miösen wolves returned to the charge, seized his bloody snout; then, by an unparalleled exertion requiring both strength and skill, he managed to clasp his entire jaw in one hand. The wolf struggled frantically with rage and pain; foam

dropped from his compressed lips, and his eyes, distended with rage, seemed starting from their sockets. Of the two foes, the one whose bones were shattered by sharp teeth, whose flesh was rent by cruel claws, was not the man but the wild beast; the one whose howl was most savage, whose expression was most fierce, was not the animal but the man.

Finally, the latter, collecting all his strength, exhausted by the aged wolf's prolonged resistance, squeezed his muzzle in both hands with such force that blood gushed from the creature's nose and mouth; his flaming eyes grew dim, and half closed; he tottered, and fell lifeless at his victor's feet. The feeble twitching of his tail and the convulsive and occasional shudder which shook his entire frame, alone showed that he was not yet quite dead.

All at once a final quiver ran through the expiring frame, and all signs of life ceased.

"There you lie, dead, old wolf," said the little man, kicking him contemptuously. "Did you think that you could live on after you had encountered me? You will hasten no more with muffled step across the snow, following the scent and the track of your prey; you are food for wolves or vultures now yourself; you have devoured many a lost traveller on the shores of Miösen during your long life of murder and carnage; now you yourself are dead, you will eat no more men. 'T is a pity!"

He took up a sharp stone, crouched beside the wolf's warm, palpitating body, broke the limbs at their joints, severed the head from the shoulders, slit the skin from head to heel, stripped it off, as he might remove his own

waistcoat, and in the twinkling of an eye nothing was left of the much-dreaded wolf of Miösen but a bare and bleeding carcass. He flung his trophy over his shoulders, bruised with bites, turning inside out the skin, still reeking and stained with long streaks of blood.

"Needs must," he muttered, "dress in the skins of beasts; that of a man is too thin to keep out the cold."

As he thus talked to himself, more hideous than ever beneath his loathsome burden, the bear, tired no doubt of inaction, furtively approached the other object lying in the shadow, to which we referred in the beginning of this chapter, and a crunching of bones, mingled with faint, agonized moans, soon rose from this gloomy quarter of the hall. The small man turned.

"Friend!" cried he in threatening tones; "ah, you good-for-nothing Friend! Here, come here!"

And picking up a huge stone, he hurled it at the monster's head. The creature, stunned by the blow, reluctantly tore himself from his prey, and crawled, licking his bloody chaps, to fall panting at the little man's feet, lifting his huge head and wriggling, as if to ask pardon for his rash act.

Then ensued between the two monsters — for we may well apply that name to the dweller in Arbar ruin — an exchange of significant growls. Those of the man expressed anger and authority; those of the bear, entreaty and submission.

"There," said the man at last, pointing with his crooked finger to the flayed body of the wolf, "there is your victim; leave mine to me."

The bear, after smelling at the wolf's carcass, shook his head discontentedly, and turned his eye toward the man who seemed to be his master.

"I understand," said the latter; "that is too dead for you, while there is still life in the other. You are refined in your pleasures, Friend, — quite as much so as a man; you like to have your food retain its life until the instant when you tear it limb from limb; you love to feel the flesh expire beneath your teeth; you enjoy nothing unless it suffers. We are alike; for I am not a man, Friend; I am superior to that wretched race; I am a wild beast like you. How I wish that you could speak to me, comrade Friend, to tell me whether my joy equals that which thrills your bearish soul when you devour a man's heart. But no; I should be loath to hear you speak, lest your voice should recall to me the human voice. Yes, growl at my feet with that growl which makes the stray goatherd tremble among the mountains; it pleases me as the voice of a friend, because it proclaims you his enemy. Look up, Friend, look up at me; lick my hands with that tongue which has drunk so often of human blood. Your teeth are white like mine: it is no fault of ours if they be not red as a new-made wound; but blood washes away blood. More than once from the depths of some dark cave I have seen the maidens of Kiölen or Oëlmœ bathe their bare feet in some mountain torrent, singing the while in sweet tones; but I prefer your hairy snout and your hoarse cries to those melodious voices and satin-smooth faces; for they terrify mankind."

As he said this, he sat down and yielded his hand to

the caresses of the monster, who, rolling on his back at his master's feet, lavished all sorts of endearments upon him, like a spaniel displaying his pretty tricks before the sofa of his mistress.

Stranger yet was the intelligent attention with which he seemed to follow his master's words. The singular monosyllables with which the latter interspersed them seemed particularly intelligible to his understanding; and he showed his comprehension by rearing his head suddenly, or by a vague rumbling noise in the back of his throat.

"Men say that I shun them," resumed the little man; "but it is they that shun me; they do through fear what I should do through hate. Still, you know, Friend, that I am always glad to come across a man when I am hungry or thirsty."

All at once he saw a red glow start into life in the depths of the gallery, growing brighter by degrees and faintly tinting the damp old walls.

"Here comes one now. Talk of the Devil and you see his horns. Hullo, Friend!" he added, turning to the bear; "hullo! get up!"

The animal instantly rose.

"Come, I must reward your obedience by gratifying your appetite."

With these words, the man stooped toward the object lying on the ground.

The cracking of bones broken by a hatchet was heard; but no sigh or groan was now blended with it.

"It seems," muttered the small man, "that there are

but two of us left alive in Arbar hall. There, good Friend, finish the feast which you began."

He flung toward the aforementioned outer door what he had detached from the object stretched at his feet. The bear threw himself upon his prey so rapidly that the swiftest eye could not have been sure that the fragment was indeed a human arm, clad in a bit of green stuff of the same shade as the uniform worn by the Munkholm musketeers.

"Some one is coming," said the little man, keeping his eye on the light, which was steadily advancing. "Comrade Friend, leave me alone for a moment. Ho there! Away with you!"

The obedient beast rushed to the door, backed down the steps outside, and disappeared, bearing off his disgusting booty with a satisfied howl.

At the same instant a tall man appeared at the mouth of the tunnel, whose sinuous depths still reflected a dim light. He was wrapped in a long brown cloak, and carried a dark-lantern, which he turned full on the small man's face.

The latter, still seated on his stone with folded arms, exclaimed: "Ill befall you, you who come hither guided by an idea, and not by instinct!"

But the stranger, making no reply, seemed studying him carefully.

"Look at me," he continued, raising his head; "an hour hence you may have no voice left with which to boast that you have seen me."

The new-comer, moving his light up and down the

little man's person, seemed even more surprised than frightened.

"Well, what astonishes you so much?" rejoined the little man, with a laugh like the breaking of bones. "I have legs and arms like your own; only my limbs will not like yours serve to feed wildcats and crows!"

The stranger at length replied, in a low but confident voice, as if he only feared being heard from without: "Hear me; I come, not as an enemy, but as a friend."

The other interrupted, "Then why did you not strip off your human form?"

"It is my purpose to do you a service, if you be he whom I seek."

"You mean, to ask a service. Man, you waste your breath. I can do no service to any save those who are weary of life."

"By your words," replied the stranger, "I am sure that you are the man I want; but your stature — Hans of Iceland is a giant. You cannot be he."

"You are the first who ever doubted it to my face."

"What! can it be?" And the stranger approached the little man. "But I always heard that Hans of Iceland was of colossal height."

"Add my renown to my height, and you will see that I am taller than Mount Hecla."

"Indeed! Tell me, I pray, are you really Hans, a native of Klipstadur in Iceland?"

"It is not in words that I should answer that question," said the little man, rising; and the look which he cast at the rash stranger made him start back several paces.

"Confine yourself, I beg, to answering it by that glance," he replied in a voice of entreaty, casting a look toward the exit, which showed his regret that he had ever entered; "I came here in your interests alone."

Upon entering the hall, the new-comer, having but a glimpse of the person whom he accosted, had retained his self-possession; but when the master of Arbar rose, with his tigerish visage, his thick-set limbs, his bloody shoulders, but half concealed by a skin still green, his huge hands armed with claws, and his fiery eyes, the bold stranger shuddered, like an ignorant traveller who thinks he is handling an eel and feels the sting of a viper.

"My interests?" repeated the monster. "Have you come to tell me of some spring which I may poison, some village I may burn, or some Munkholm musketeer I may slaughter?"

"Perhaps. Listen: The miners of Norway are in a state of revolt. You know what disaster follows in the train of revolt."

"Yes, — murder, rape, sacrilege, fire, and pillage."

"All these I offer you."

The little man laughed.

"I should not wait for you to offer them."

The brutal sneer accompanying these words made the stranger again shudder. He went on, however: —

"In the name of the miners, I offer you the command of the insurrection."

The small man was silent for an instant. All at once his dark countenance assumed an expression of infernal malice.

"Does the offer really come from them?" said he.

This question seemed to embarrass the new-comer; but as he was sure that he was unknown to his terrible interlocutor, he readily recovered himself.

"Why have the miners rebelled?"

"To throw off the burden of the royal protectorate."

"Only for that?" replied the other in the same mocking tone.

"They also wish to free the prisoner of Munkholm."

"Is this the sole purpose of the movement?" repeated the small man in a voice which confused the stranger.

"I know of no other," he stammered.

"Oh, you know of no other!"

These words were pronounced in the same sarcastic tone. The stranger, to hide the embarrassment which they caused him, hastily drew from beneath his cloak a heavy purse which he flung at the monster's feet.

"Here is your pay as commander-in-chief."

The small man spurned the purse with his foot.

"I will not have it. Do you imagine that if I wanted your gold or your blood I should wait for your permission to gratify my desire?"

The stranger made a gesture of surprise, almost of terror.

"It is a present from the royal miners."

"I will not have it, I tell you. Gold is useless to me. Men will sell their soul, but they do not sell their life. That must be taken by force."

"Then I may tell the miners that the terrible Hans of Iceland accepts their leadership, but not their gold?"

"I do not accept it."

These words, uttered in curt tones, seemed to strike the pretended envoy from the rebellious miners very unpleasantly.

"What?" he asked.

"No!" repeated the other.

"You refuse to take part in an expedition which presents so many advantages?"

"I am quite able to pillage farms, lay waste villages, and massacre peasants or soldiers, single-handed."

"But consider that by accepting the offer of the miners you are assured of a free pardon."

"Does this offer also come from the miners?" asked the other, with a laugh.

"I will not disguise from you the fact," replied the stranger, with an air of mystery, "that it comes from an important personage who is deeply interested in the insurrection."

"And is this important personage so sure that he will himself escape hanging?"

"If you knew who he is, you would not shake your head so significantly."

"Indeed! Well, who is he?"

"I may not tell you."

The small man stepped forward and clapped the stranger on the shoulder, still with the same sardonic sneer.

"Shall I tell *you*?"

The man wrapped in the cloak gave a start; it was a start of both fright and wounded pride. He was prepared for neither the monster's abrupt proposal, nor for his savage familiarity.

"I am only laughing at you," added the brigand. "You little guess that I know all. This important personage is the Lord High Chancellor of Norway and Denmark; and you yourself are the Lord High Chancellor of Norway and Denmark."

It was indeed he. On reaching Arbar ruin, toward which we left him journeying with Musdæmon, he had been unwilling to intrust to any one else the task of securing the brigand, by whom he was far from supposing himself known and expected. Never, even after years had elapsed, did Count d'Ahlefeld, with all his power and all his diplomacy, discover how Hans of Iceland acquired his information. Was it through Musdæmon's treachery? True, it was Musdæmon who suggested to the noble count that it would be well to see the brigand in person; but what profit could he derive from his perfidy? Had the bandit captured upon some one of his numerous victims, papers relating to the chancellor's schemes? But Frederic d'Ahlefeld was, with the sole exception of Musdæmon, the only living being acquainted with his father's plans, and frivolous as he was, he was not quite so senseless as to expose such a secret. Moreover, he was in garrison at Munkholm, at least so the chancellor supposed. Those who read the close of this scene, without being any better able to solve the problem than was Count d'Ahlefeld, will see how much truth there was in this latter hypothesis.

One of Count d'Ahlefeld's most marked characteristics was his great presence of mind. When he heard himself so abruptly named, he could not repress an exclamation

of surprise ; but in the twinkling of an eye, his pale, proud features lost their expression of fear and astonishment, and recovered their usual calm composure.

"Well, yes," said he, "I will be frank with you ; I am indeed the chancellor. But I hope you will be equally frank with me."

A burst of laughter interrupted him.

"Have I waited to be urged to tell you my name, or to tell you your own ?"

"Tell me with the same sincerity how you found me out ?"

"Have you never heard that Hans of Iceland can see through mountains ?"

The count tried to insist.

"Consider me as a friend."

"Your hand, Count d'Ablefeld," said the little man, with brutal familiarity. Then he stared the minister in the face, exclaiming : "Could our two souls escape from our bodies at this moment, I fancy that Satan would hesitate to decide which of the two belonged to the monster."

The haughty noble bit his lip ; but between his fear of the robber and his desire to secure him as his tool, he managed to disguise his resentment.

"Do not imperil your own interests ; accept the command of the rebellion, and trust to my gratitude."

"Chancellor of Norway, you count on the success of your schemes, like an old woman who dreams of the gown which she will spin from stolen hemp, while the cat's claws tangle her spindle."

"Reflect once more, before you reject my offers."

"Once more, I, the brigand, say to you, Lord Chancellor of both kingdoms, No!"

"I expected a different answer, after the eminent service which you have already rendered me."

"What service?" asked the robber.

"Was it not you who murdered Captain Dispolsen?" replied the chancellor.

"That may be, Count d'Ahlefeld; I do not know him. Who is he?"

"What! did not the iron casket which he had in charge fall to your share?"

This question seemed to sharpen the robber's memory.

"Stay!" said he; "I do remember that man and his iron casket. It was on Urchtal Sands."

"At least," rejoined the chancellor, "if you could restore that casket to me, my gratitude would be unbounded. Tell me what has become of that casket, for I am sure it is in your possession."

The noble minister laid such stress upon this request that the brigand was struck by it.

"So, then, that iron casket is of the utmost importance to your Grace, my Lord Chancellor?"

"Yes."

"What shall my reward be if I tell you where it is?"

"Anything that you may desire, my dear Hans."

"Well, I will not tell you."

"Pooh! you are joking! Think what a service you can do me."

"That is exactly what I am thinking."

"I will insure you a vast fortune; I will ask your pardon from the king."

"You had better beg your own from me," said the bandit. "Look you, Lord Chancellor of Norway and Denmark, the tiger does not devour the hyena. I will permit you to leave my presence with your life, because you are a scoundrel, and every instant that you live, every thought of your heart, causes fresh misery for mankind and fresh crime for yourself. But return not, or I may teach you that my hatred spares no one, not even a villain. As for your captain, do not flatter yourself that it was on your account I slaughtered him; it was his uniform which doomed him, as it did this other wretch, whom I did not murder to gratify you either, I assure you."

With these words, he seized the noble count by the arm and dragged him toward the body lying in the shadow. As he finished his protestations, the light from the lantern fell upon this object. It was a mutilated corpse, and was indeed dressed in the uniform of an officer of the Munkholm Musketeers. The chancellor approached it with a sense of horror. All at once his eye rested on the pallid, blood-stained face of the dead. The livid, half-parted lips, the bristling hair, the discolored cheeks, and lustreless eyes could not disguise that countenance from him. He uttered a fearful shriek: "My God! Frederic! My son!"

Doubt not that hearts seemingly the most hardened still conceal in their innermost recesses some trace of affection unknown even to themselves, apparently hidden by vice and passion, like a mysterious witness and a future avenger. It may be said to exist, that it may some day make

crime acquainted with grief. It silently bides its time. The wicked man bears it in his bosom and is unconscious of it, because no ordinary affection is sufficient to pierce the thick crust of selfishness and iniquity which covers it; but let one of the rare and genuine sorrows of life appear unawares, and it plunges a sharp-edged sword into the dark regions of that soul and probes its lowest depths. Then the unknown sentiment of love is revealed to the wretched criminal, all the more violent for its long repression, all the more painful from his lack of sensibility, because the sting of misfortune was forced to stab the heart more deeply in order to reach it. Nature wakes and casts aside her chains; she delivers the miscreant to unwonted despair, to unheard-of torments; he feels, compressed into a single instant, all the sufferings which he has defied for years. The most various pangs rend him simultaneously. His heart, burdened by dull amazement, revolts to find itself a prey to convulsive agony. He seems to experience the pains of hell while still in this life, and something beyond despair is made clear to him.

Count d'Ahlefeld loved his son without knowing it. We say his son, because, being unaware of his wife's guilt, as such he regarded Frederic, the direct heir to his name. Supposing him still at Munkholm, he was far from prepared to meet him in Arbar tower, and to find him dead! But there he lay, bruised and bleeding: it was he, impossible to doubt it. His emotions may be imagined when a realizing sense of his love for his son unexpectedly pierced his soul, together with the assurance that he was

lost to him forever. All the sensations so inadequately described in these pages burst upon his heart at once like so many claps of thunder. Stunned, as it were, by surprise, terror, and despair, he cast himself upon the ground, and wrung his hands, repeating in woful accents: "My son! my son!"

The brigand laughed. It was horrible to hear such laughter mingled with the groans of a father looking upon the dead body of his son.

"By my ancestor Ingulf! you may call, Count d'Ahlefeld, but you cannot wake him."

All at once his cruel face darkened, and he said in a melancholy voice: "Weep for your son, if you will; I avenge mine."

The sound of footsteps hurrying along the gallery interrupted the words upon his lips; and as he turned in surprise, four tall men, with drawn swords, rushed into the room; a fifth, short and stout, followed, bearing a torch in one hand and a sword in the other. He was wrapped in a brown cloak, like that worn by the chancellor.

"My lord," he exclaimed, "we heard your voice, and hastened to your assistance."

The reader has doubtless recognized Musdemon and the four armed retainers who formed the count's escort.

As the torchlight filled the room with its ruddy glow, the five new-comers paused in horror-stricken dismay; and it was indeed an awful sight. On the one hand, the bloody remains of the wolf, the disfigured body of the young officer; on the other, the father, with his wild eyes and frantic shrieks; and beside him the fearful monster,

turning on his assailants a hideous front, indicative of dauntless surprise.

At the sight of this unlooked-for reinforcement the idea of vengeance took possession of the count, and roused him from his despair.

"Death to that brigand!" he cried, drawing his sword; "he has murdered my son! Kill him! kill him!"

"Has he murdered Mr. Frederic?" said Musdæmon; and the torch in his hand did not reveal the slightest change in his countenance.

"Kill him! kill him!" repeated the frantic count.

And the whole six rushed upon the robber. He, surprised by this sudden attack, retreated toward the opening which overhung the precipice, with a fierce roar, expressive rather of rage than fear.

Six swords were directed against him, and his eyes flamed forth greater fury, while his features wore a more menacing expression than those of any of his aggressors. He had grasped his stone axe, and, forced by the number of his assailants to confine himself to defensive action, whirled it round and round in his hand so rapidly that the circle described, covered him like a shield. A myriad sparks flashed from the point of his assailants' swords as they clashed against the edge of the hatchet; but not a single blade touched him. And yet, exhausted by his recent battle with the wolf, he lost ground imperceptibly, and soon found himself driven close against the door opening upon the abyss.

"Courage, friends!" shouted the count; "let us hurl the monster over this precipice."

"Before I fall, the stars themselves shall fall," replied the brigand.

But the aggressors redoubled their ardor and their assurance as they saw that the small man was compelled to descend one step of the flight which overhung the abyss.

"Good! one effort more!" cried the lord chancellor; "he needs must fall; push your advantage! Wretch, you have committed your last crime. Courage, men!"

While with his right hand he continued his fearful evolutions with the axe, the brigand, without deigning a reply, with his left hand grasped a horn which hung at his belt, and raising it to his lips, again and again blew a long, hoarse blast, which was answered suddenly by a roar from the gulf beneath.

A few instants later, as the count and his followers, still pressing the little man hard, rejoiced that they had driven him down a second step, the huge head of a white bear appeared at the broken end of the staircase. Struck dumb with amazement and fright, they shrank back. The bear climbed the stairs with a lumbering gait, showing his bloody jaws and sharp teeth as he did so.

"Thanks, good Friend!" cried the brigand. And taking advantage of his enemy's surprise, he sprang upon the back of his bear, who slowly descended the stairs backwards, still keeping his threatening front turned upon his master's foes.

Soon, recovering from their first astonishment, they beheld the bear, carrying the brigand beyond their reach, descend into the abyss, probably in the same way that he

ascended, by clinging to the trunks of trees and to projecting rocks. They tried to roll great bowlders down upon him ; but before they could detach a single one of those ancient granite fragments which had slumbered there so long, the brigand and his strange steed had vanished in a cave.

XXVI.

No, no, laugh no more. Look you, that which I thought so humorous has its serious side as well, a very serious side, like everything in this world ! Believe me, that word, chance, is blasphemy ; nothing beneath the sun is the work of chance ; and do you not see herein the purpose marked out by Providence ? — LESSING : *Emilia Galotti*.

YES, a deep design often lies at the root of what men call chance. There seems to be a mysterious hand which marks the cause and purpose of events. We inveigh against fickle fortune, against the strange accidents of our lot, and lo ! chaos is made clear by a fearful flash of lightning or a marvellous beam of light, and human wisdom is humbled by the great lessons of fate.

If, for instance, when Frederic d'Ahlefeld displayed his magnificent attire, his foolish complacency, and his presumptuous pride, in some sumptuous apartment, to the ladies of Copenhagen ; if some man, endowed with the gift of second sight, had troubled his frivolous thoughts by gloomy revelations ; if he had told him that one day the brilliant uniform of which he boasted should cause his death ; that a monster in human shape should drink his blood as greedily as he, careless epicure that he was, drank the wines of France and Bohemia ; that the locks upon which he could not lavish too many essences and perfumes should sweep the dust of a cave haunted by wild

beasts ; that the arm which he so gracefully offered to the fair ladies of Charlottenburg should be flung to a bear like a half-gnawed chicken-bone, — how would Frederic have answered these dismal prophecies ? With a laugh and a pirouette ; and, more frightful still, most sensible men would have applauded his reckless conduct.

Let us consider his destiny more closely. Is it not strange to find that the crime of Count and Countess d'Ahlefeld met with such fitting punishment ? They wove an infamous plot against the daughter of a prisoner ; this unfortunate girl by a mere chance found a protector, who saw fit to remove their son, charged by them to carry out their abominable scheme. This son, their only hope, was sent far from the scene of his purposed villany ; and hardly had he reached his destination, when another avenging chance caused his death. Thus in their attempt to bring dishonor upon an innocent yet detested young girl, they plunged their own guilty yet adored son into the oblivion of the grave. The wretched pair were made miserable by their own hands.

XXVII.

Ah, here comes our lovely countess ! Forgive me, Madam, if I may not have the honor of a visit from you to-day. I am busy. Another time, dear Countess, another time ; but to-day I will not detain you longer. —
The Prince and Ursina.

THE day after his visit to Munkholm, the governor of Throindhjem ordered his travelling carriage to be made ready very early in the morning, hoping to start off before Countess d'Ahlefeld was awake ; but we have already observed that her slumbers were light.

The general had just signed his final instructions to the bishop, into whose hands the government was to be committed during his absence. He rose, put on his fur-lined coat, and was about to leave the room, when the usher announced the chancellor's wife.

This piece of ill luck confused the old soldier, who could laugh at the fiery rain of a hundred guns, but not at the artifices of a woman. However, he took leave of the wicked creature with a tolerably good grace, and disguised his annoyance until she whispered in his ear with that crafty look which would fain seem confidential, "Well, noble General, what did he say?"

"Who,—Poël ? He said that the carriage was ready."

"I mean the prisoner of Munkholm, General."

"Oh !"

"Did he answer your questions satisfactorily?"

"Why — Yes, to be sure, Countess," said the much embarrassed governor.

"Did you find proofs that he was concerned in the conspiracy among the miners?"

The general involuntarily exclaimed, "Noble lady, he is innocent."

He stopped short, for he knew that he had uttered the conviction of his heart, not of his head.

"He is innocent!" repeated the countess, with a look of consternation and incredulity; for she trembled lest Schumacker had really proved to the governor the innocence which it was so much to the chancellor's interest to deny.

The governor had had time to reflect; he answered the persistent gentlewoman in a tone which quieted her fears, for it revealed his doubt and anxiety.

"Innocent — Yes, if you choose —"

"If I choose, General!" And the wicked woman laughed aloud.

Her laughter offended the governor, who said, "By your leave, Countess, I will report my interview with the ex-chancellor to the viceroy." Then he bowed low, and went down to the courtyard, where his carriage awaited him.

"Yes," said Countess d'Ahlefeld, as she returned to her rooms; "go, my knight-errant, for your absence rids us of the protector of our enemies. Go; for your departure is the signal for my Frederic's return. I wonder how you dared to send the handsomest young man in Copenhagen to those horrid mountains! Luckily, it will be easy enough now for me to have him recalled."

At this thought she turned to her favorite attendant.

"Lisbeth, my dear, send to Bergen for two dozen of those little combs which our elegant young men are wearing in their hair, inquire for the famous Scudéry's last novel, and see that my dear Frederic's monkey is washed in rose-water every morning, without fail."

"What! my gracious mistress," asked Lisbeth, "is there a chance that Mr. Frederic will come back?"

"Yes, indeed; and we must do everything that he wishes, so that he may be glad to see me again. I must arrange a surprise for him."

Poor mother!



XXVIII.

Bernard hurries along the shores of the Arlanza. He is like a lion rushing from his den, seeking the hunters, and resolved to conquer them or die. The brave and resolute Spaniard sets forth. With a quick step, in his hand a heavy spear, in which he puts his trust, Bernard traverses the ruins of Arlanza. — *Old Spanish Romance.*

ON descending from the tower from whose summit he had seen Munkholm light, Ordener looked in every direction, until he was exhausted, for his poor guide, Benignus Spiagudry. He called him repeatedly, but only echo answered. Surprised but not alarmed by this inexplicable disappearance, he attributed it to some panic which had seized upon the timid keeper, and after generously blaming himself for having left him, even for a few moments, he decided to spend the night upon the cliff, in order to give him time to return. Then he ate something, and wrapping himself in his mantle, laid down by

the dying embers, kissed Ethel's ringlet, and soon fell asleep; for an anxious heart cannot keep awake a man whose conscience is clear.

At sunrise he rose, but found no trace of Spiagudry except his wallet and cloak, which had been left in the tower, showing that his flight had been very hasty. Then, despairing of his return, at least to Oëlmœ Cliff, Ordener resolved to set off without him, for it was on the next day that he hoped to meet Hans of Iceland at Walderhog.

It has been stated in the earlier chapters of this story that Ordener had accustomed himself to the hardships incident to a roving and adventurous life. Having already travelled through northern Norway several times, he did not need a guide, now that he knew where to find the robber. He accordingly turned his lonely steps toward the northwest, no longer having Benignus Spiagudry at his side to tell him just how much quartz or spar each hill contained, what traditions were connected with every ruin, and whether this or that gaping chasm was caused by an ancient flood or by some volcanic action. He walked a whole day through those mountains which, proceeding at intervals like foot-hills from the principal chain traversing the length of Norway, slope gradually down to the sea; so that the coast of that country is a mere succession of promontories and fjords, while inland it is nothing but a series of mountains and valleys, a strange conformation, which has caused Norway to be compared to the skeleton of a great fish.

It was no easy matter to travel in such a region. Sometimes he was forced to follow the stony bed of a dry

stream, sometimes to cross, by an unsteady bridge made of a tree-trunk, over a road which torrents born but the day before had chosen for their bed.

Sometimes, too, Ordener would journey for hours without seeing any sign of the presence of man in these wild places, save an occasional glimpse of the sails of a wind-mill upon the top of a hill, or the sound of a distant forge, whose smoke blew hither and thither like a black plume, as the wind shifted this way and that.

Now and again he met a peasant mounted on a little gray pony, its head down, and scarcely more untamed than its master; or a dealer in furs and skins, seated in his sledge, drawn by reindeer, a long rope fastened behind, the end covered with knots, meant to frighten away wolves, as it rebounded from the pebbles in the road.

If Ordener asked this trader the way to Walderhog cave, the travelling merchant, familiar only with the names and positions of the places to which his business took him, would answer indifferently: "Keep to the northwest till you come to Hervalyn village, then cross Dollysax ravine, and by night you will reach Surb, which is only two miles from Walderhog."

If Ordener put the same question to the peasant, the latter, deeply imbued with the traditions of the country and the fireside tales, would shake his head again and again, and stop his gray horse, as he said: "Walderhog! Walderhog cave! There the stones sing, the dry bones dance, and the demon of Iceland dwells; it cannot be to Walderhog cave that your worship wishes to go?"

"Yes, indeed," Ordener would reply.

"Has your worship lost your mother, or has fire destroyed your farm, or has one of your neighbors stolen your fat pig?"

"No, truly," the young man would answer.

"Then some magician must have cast a spell over your worship's senses."

"My friend, I asked you to tell me the way to Walderhog."

"I am trying to answer your question, sir. Farewell. Keep to the north! I can tell you how to go there, but I do not know how you will get back."

And the peasant would ride off, crossing himself as he went.

To the gloomy monotony of the road was added the inconvenience of a fine, penetrating rain, which took possession of the sky toward noonday, and increased the difficulties of the way. No song-bird dared venture forth; and Ordener, chilled to the bone beneath his cloak, saw only the goshawk and the falcon hover above his head, or the kingfisher fly up from the reeds of a pond with a fish in its claws, startled by his tread.

It was after dark when the young traveller, after making his way through the forest of aspens and beeches which lies close to Dodlysax ravine, reached the village of Surb, where (as the reader may remember) Spiagudry had asked leave to establish his headquarters. The smell of tar and the charcoal smoke told Ordener that he was approaching a seafaring population. He advanced to the first hut which he could see through the darkness. According to Norwegian custom, the low, narrow entrance

was closed by a large, transparent fish-skin, tinged at this moment by the flickering red light of the fire. He knocked on the wooden doorpost, saying, —

“It is a traveller!”

“Come in, come in,” answered a voice from within.

At the same instant an eager hand raised the fish-skin, and Ordener was admitted to the cone-shaped home of a Norwegian longshore fisherman. It was a sort of circular tent made of wood and earth, in the centre of which blazed a fire, where the purple glow of turf was mixed with the white light of the pine. Beside this fire the fisherman, his wife, and two children dressed in rags were seated at a table set with wooden plates and earthen cups. On the opposite side of the fire was a pile of nets and oars; a couple of reindeer were asleep on a bed of dried leaves and skins, which by its ample size seemed intended also as a resting-place for the family and any guests whom it might please Heaven to send them. It took more than one glance to make out the arrangement of the hut; for a thick, pungent smoke, which found but scanty outlet through a hole in the pointed roof, wrapped everything in a misty but almost impenetrable veil.

As soon as Ordener crossed the threshold, the fisherman and his wife rose, and returned his greeting in a frank and friendly manner. Norwegian peasants welcome travellers perhaps as much from a lively feeling of curiosity inherent in their nature as from their native inclination to hospitality.

“Sir,” said the fisherman, “you must be cold and hungry; here are fire to dry your cloak and excellent

bark bread to satisfy your appetite. Afterward your worship may be willing to tell us who you are, where you come from, where you are going, and what stories the gossips relate in your native place."

"Yes, sir," added his wife; "and you might add to that bark bread — which, as my husband says, is excellent — a delicious bit of salt fish, seasoned with whale oil. Sit down, stranger."

"And if your worship does not like Saint Usuph's¹ fare," added the man, "and will have patience for a few moments, I can promise you a splendid piece of venison, or at least a pheasant's wing. We are expecting a visit from the best hunter in the three provinces. Is n't that so, good Maase?"

"Maase," the name which the fisherman gave his wife, is a Norwegian word meaning "sea-gull." The wife did not seem in the least offended, either because it was really her name, or because she took it as a term of endearment.

"The best hunter! I should say so," she answered with great emphasis. "He means my brother, the famous Kennybol. God bless all his undertakings! He has come to spend a few days with us, and you shall drink a mug of good beer with him. He is a traveller like you."

"Many thanks, my kind hostess," said Ordener, with a smile; "but I must be content with your tempting salt fish and a bit of this bark bread. I have not time to wait for your brother, the mighty hunter. I must set off again immediately."

¹ The patron saint of fishermen.

Good Maase, flattered by the stranger's praises of her fish and her brother, and vexed at his hasty departure, exclaimed: "You are very kind, sir. But why should you leave us so soon?"

"I must."

"Must you venture among these mountains at this hour and in such weather?"

"My business is important."

These answers roused the native curiosity of the young man's entertainers as much as they excited their surprise.

The fisherman rose, and said: "You are in the house of Christopher Buldus Braal, fisherman, of the village of Surb."

The woman added: "Maase Kennybol is his wife and servant."

When Norwegian peasants wish to ask a stranger's name in polite style, it is their custom to tell him their own.

Orderer answered: "And I am a traveller, who is neither sure of the name he bears nor of the road he travels."

This strange reply did not seem to satisfy fisher Braal.

"By the crown of Gorman the Old," said he, "I did not suppose there was more than one man in Norway just now who was not sure of his name. I mean the noble Baron Thorwick, who is to change his name, they say, to Count Danneskiold, on account of his famous marriage to the chancellor's daughter. At least, dear Maase, that's

the latest news from Throndhjem. I congratulate you, stranger, upon this likeness between you and the son of the viceroy, the great Count Guldenlew."

"As your worship," added the wife, her face beaming with curiosity, "does not seem able to tell us anything about yourself, can you not tell us something about what is going on just now, for instance, something about this wonderful marriage of which my husband speaks?"

"Yes," rejoined her husband, with a self-important air, "that's the very latest news. Within a month the viceroy's son will marry the chancellor's daughter."

"I doubt it," said Ordener.

"You doubt it, sir! I assure you that the thing is certain. I have it on the best authority. The fellow who told me had it from Mr. Poël, the favorite servant of the noble Baron Thorwick, — that is, the noble Count Danneskiöld. Can any storm have troubled the waters within the week? Has this grand match been broken off?"

"I think so," replied the young man, smiling.

"If that is so, sir, I am wrong. Never light the fire to fry the fish before it is in the net. But have they really quarrelled? Who told you so?"

"Nobody," said Ordener. "I merely imagined so."

At this frank confession the fisherman could not help transgressing the laws of Norwegian courtesy by a loud burst of laughter.

"A thousand pardons, sir. But it is easy to see that you are indeed a traveller, and probably a stranger. Do you fancy that things will turn out as you happen to

wish, and that the sky will be clear or cloudy at your caprice ? ”

Here the fisherman, well versed in the affairs of the nation, as all Norse peasants are, began to explain to Ordener why this marriage could not fail to take place : it was essential to the interests of the d’Ahlefeld family ; the viceroy could not refuse the king, who desired it ; besides, it was said that the future husband and wife were very much in love. In a word, fisher Braal could not doubt that the match would come off ; he only wished he was as sure of killing next day that confounded dogfish which infested Master-Bick pond.

Ordener was little inclined to carry on a political discussion with so uncouth a statesman, and was delighted when the arrival of another guest relieved him of all embarrassment.

“ It is he ; it is my brother ! ” cried old Maase.

And no less event than the arrival of her brother could have diverted her from the rapt admiration with which she listened to her husband’s lengthy discourse.

The latter, while the two children threw themselves noisily upon their uncle’s neck, quietly offered him his hand, saying, —

“ Welcome, brother.”

Then, turning to Ordener : “ Sir, this is our brother, the famous hunter Kennybol, from the mountains of Kiölen.”

“ A hearty greeting to you all,” said the mountaineer, taking off his bearskin cap. “ Brother, I’ve had as bad luck in hunting upon your coast as you would probably

have had if you had gone fishing in our mountains. I think I could sooner fill my game-bag if I chased elves and goblins in the misty forests of Queen Mab. Sister Maase, you are the first sea-mew whom I have caught sight of to-day. Here, friends, God keep you! but this wretched grouse is all that the best hunter in the province of Throindhjem has got in a whole day's tramp through the heather in this weather."

With these words he drew from his pouch and laid on the table a white ptarmigan, declaring that it was not worth a shot.

"But," he muttered between his teeth, "my faithful arquebuse, you shall soon hunt far bigger game. If you can bring down no more chamois or elk skins, you shall make holes in green jackets and red jerkins."

These words, but half heard, struck the curious Maase.

"Eh!" asked she; "what did you say, brother?"

"I said that there was always a goblin dancing under a woman's tongue."

"You are right, brother Kennybol," cried the fisherman. "Eve's daughters are all curious, like their mother. Were n't you talking of green jackets?"

"Brother Braal," replied the hunter, with some spirit, "I trust my secrets to no one but my musket, because I am sure that then they will never be repeated."

"There's talk in the village," boldly continued the fisherman, "of a revolt among the miners. Do you know anything about it, brother?"

The mountaineer picked up his cap and pulled it over his eyes, with a sidelong look at the stranger; then he

bent toward the fisherman and said in a low, stern tone: "Silence!"

The fisherman shook his head several times.

"Brother Kennybol, the fish may be silent, but it falls into the net all the same."

There was a short pause. The two brothers exchanged meaning glances; the children picked the feathers from the ptarmigan as it lay on the table; the good wife listened, and hoped to guess more than was actually said; and Ordener studied them all.

"If you have but meagre fare to-day," suddenly observed the hunter, evidently anxious to change the subject, "it shall not be so to-morrow. Brother Braal, catch the king of fish, if you can, for I promise you plenty of bear's grease to dress it."

"Bear's grease!" cried Maase. "Has any one seen a bear in the neighborhood? Patrick, Regner, my boys, I forbid you to leave the house. A bear!"

"Make yourself easy, sister; you will have nothing to fear from him after to-morrow. Yes, it was really a bear that I saw about two miles away from Surb,—a white bear. He seemed to be carrying off a man, or rather an animal. But no, it may have been a goat-herd, for goatherds dress in the skins of animals; however, I was not near enough to tell. What amazed me, was that he carried his prey on his back, and not in his teeth."

"Really, brother?"

"Yes; and the creature must have been dead, for it made no attempt to defend itself."

"But," sagely inquired the fisherman, "if it were dead, how did it stay on the bear's back?"

"That's more than I can say. Never mind; it shall be the bear's last meal. As I entered the village I engaged six strong companions, and to-morrow, sister Maase, I will bring you the handsomest white fur that ever ran over mountain snow."

"Take care, brother," said the woman; "you have seen strange things, truly. That bear may be the Devil."

"Are you mad?" interrupted the mountaineer, with a laugh; "the Devil change himself into a bear, indeed! Into a cat or a monkey, I grant you; but to a bear! Oh, by Saint Eldon the exorciser, you're worse than any child or old woman, with your superstition!"

The poor woman hung her head.

"Brother, you were my lord and master before my revered husband cast his eyes upon me; do as your guardian angel bids you."

"But," the fisherman asked the mountaineer, "where did you meet with this bear?"

"Between Lake Miösen and Walderhog."

"Walderhog!" said the woman, crossing herself.

"Walderhog!" repeated Ordener.

"But, brother," rejoined the fisherman; "I hope you were not travelling toward Walderhog."

"I! Heaven forbid; it was the bear."

"Shall you go there to-morrow in search of him?" broke in the terrified Maase.

"No, truly; how can you suppose, friends, that even a bear would venture to take refuge in a cave where —"

He stopped short, and all three made the sign of the cross.

"You are right," replied the fisherman; "wild beasts would be warned away by their instinct."

"My good friends," said Ordener, "what is there so frightful about this Walderhog cave?"

They looked at one another in stupid surprise, as if they could not understand such a question.

"Is that where King Walder's tomb is?" added the young man.

"Yes," replied the woman; "a stone tomb which sings."

"And that's not all," said the fisherman.

"No," she added; "the bones of the dead dance there by night."

"And that's not all," said the mountaineer.

All were silent, as if they dared not go on.

"Well," asked Ordener, "what else is there that is supernatural?"

"Young man," said the mountaineer, gravely, "you should not speak so lightly; when you see an old gray wolf like me, shudder."

The young man answered, with a gentle smile: "Still, I should like to know all the marvels which occur in this Walderhog cave; for that is exactly where I am going."

These words seemed to turn his three hearers into stone.

"To Walderhog! Heavens! are you going to Walderhog?"

"And he says that," rejoined the fisherman, "just as I might say I'm going to Loevig to sell my codfish, or to Ralph's meadow for herring. To Walderhog! Great Heavens!"

"Poor young man!" cried the wife; "were you born without a guardian angel? Have you no patron saint? Alas! it must be so; for you do not even seem to know your own name."

"And what motive," broke in the mountaineer, "can lead your worship to that fearful spot?"

"I have a question to ask," answered Ordener.

The astonishment of his hosts grew with their curiosity.

"See here, stranger; you do not seem to be familiar with this part of the country. Your worship is doubtless mistaken; it cannot be to Walderhog that you wish to go."

"Besides," added the mountaineer, "if you want to speak with any human being, you will find none there."

"None but the demon," rejoined the woman.

"The demon! What demon?"

"Yes," she added; "the one for whom the tomb sings and the dead dance."

"Then you do not know, sir," said the fisherman, dropping his voice and approaching Ordener,—"you do not know that Walderhog cave is the favorite abode of—"

The woman stopped him.

"Husband, do not speak that name; it brings ill luck."

"Whose abode?" asked Ordener.

"That of Beelzebub incarnate," said Kennybol.

"Really, my kind hosts, I know not what you mean.

I was surely told that Walderhog was the haunt of Hans of Iceland."

A triple cry of terror arose.

"Well! — Then you do know! — He is the demon we mean!"

The woman drew her woollen kerchief over her face, and called on all the saints to witness that it was not she who uttered that name.

When the fisherman had somewhat recovered from his surprise, he looked steadily at Ordener, as if there were something about that young man which he could not comprehend.

"I did not expect, stranger, that even if I lived still longer than my father, who died at the age of one hundred and twenty, I should ever have to show the road to Walderhog to any human being possessed of his senses and believing in God."

"Surely not," cried Maase; "your worship will not go to that accursed cave; for if one only step foot inside, he must make a compact with the Devil!"

"I must go, my kind hosts, and the greatest service that you can do me is to show me the shortest road there."

"The shortest way to reach the place where you wish to go," said the fisherman, "is to throw yourself from the top of the nearest rock into the next torrent."

"Should I reach the same end," quietly asked Ordener, "by preferring a useless death to a profitable danger?"

Braal shook his head, while his brother looked scrutinizingly at the young adventurer.

"I understand," suddenly exclaimed the fisherman; "you want to earn the thousand crowns reward which the lord mayor offers for the head of this Iceland demon."

Ordener smiled.

"Young sir," added the fisherman, with deep emotion, "take my advice; give up your scheme. I am old and poor, and I would not sell the remnant of my life for a thousand crowns if I had but one day left."

The woman, with a beseeching, compassionate look, watched the effect of her husband's entreaties. Ordener made haste to reply: "It is a much higher motive which leads me to seek this robber whom you call a demon; it is for the sake of others, not my own —"

The mountaineer, who had not taken his eyes from Ordener, interrupted him.

"I understand you now. I know why you seek the demon of Iceland."

"I wish to force him to fight," said the young man.

"That's it," said Kennybol; "you are intrusted with important interests, are you not?"

"So I just said."

The mountaineer approached the young man with an air of great intelligence, and to his utter amazement whispered in his ear: "You come from Count Schumacker, from Griffenfeld, do you not?"

"Good man, he exclaimed, "how did you know that?"

And, indeed, it was hard for him to guess how a Norwegian mountaineer came to know a secret which he had confided to no one, not even to General Levin.

Kennybol leaned toward him.

"I wish you success," he observed in the same mysterious whisper. "You are a noble young man to labor thus for the oppressed."

Ordener's surprise was so great that he could scarcely find words to inquire how the mountaineer had learned the purpose of his journey.

"Silence!" said Kennybol, putting his finger to his lip. "I hope that you may gain all that you desire from the dweller in Walderhog; my arm, like yours, is loyal to the prisoner of Munkholm."

Then, raising his voice, before Ordener could answer, he added: "Brother, dear sister Maase, regard this worthy youth as another brother. Come, I think supper is ready."

"What!" interrupted Maase, "have you persuaded his worship to give up his plan for visiting the demon?"

"Sister, pray that no harm may come to him. He is a noble and worthy young man. Come, brave sir, take some food and a little rest beneath our roof; to-morrow I will show you your road, and we will set out in search, — you of the Devil, and I of my bear."



XXIX.

Comrade, ah ! comrade, what comrade's son art thou ? From what race canst thou have sprung to dare attack Fafnir thus ? — EDDA.

THE first rays of the rising sun were just reddening the highest peak of the rocks upon the seacoast, when the fisherman, who had come before the dawn to cast his nets off the shore opposite the mouth of Walderhog cave, saw a figure wrapped in a cloak or shroud descend from the rocks, and disappear beneath the much-dreaded arched roof of the cavern. Struck with terror, he commended his boat and his soul to Saint Usuph, and ran to tell his frightened family that he had seen one of the ghosts which dwell in the palace of Hans of Iceland return to the cave at daybreak.

This ghost, thenceforth the theme and dread of many a long winter evening, was no other than Ordener, the noble

son of the Norwegian viceroy, who, while both kingdoms fancied him absorbed in paying tender attentions to his haughty betrothed, had come alone and unknown to risk his life for her to whom he had given his heart and his future, for the daughter of a proscribed man.

Evil omens, sad forebodings, had thus far accompanied him. He had left the fisherman and his family, and as they parted, good Maase knelt and prayed for him. Kennybol and his six comrades, who had pointed out the right road, quitted him within half a mile of Walderhog, and those dauntless hunters who sallied forth to face a bear with a laugh on their lips, gazed in terror upon the fearless traveller as he followed that unhallowed path.

The young man entered Walderhog cave as he might have entered a long-wished-for haven. He felt a transport of delight as he thought that he was about to accomplish the object of his life, and that in a few moments he might perhaps shed his last drop of blood for his Ethel. About to attack a brigand dreaded by an entire province, it might be a monster, a very demon, it was not that frightful image which filled his fancy; he saw only the figure of the sweet captive maid, praying perhaps for him before her prison altar. Had the object of his devotion been any other than it was, he might have weighed for an instant, only to scorn them, the dangers in search of which he had journeyed so far; but what room is there for reflection in a youthful heart throbbing with the double stimulus of heroic sacrifice and noble love?

He advanced proudly into the vaulted cavern, which

echoed and re-echoed the sound of his footsteps, not deigning even a glance at the stalactites and the century-old columns of basalt which towered above him amid mosses, lichen, and ivy, — a confused medley of weird forms, from which the superstitious credulity of the Norwegian country-folk had more than once created hosts of evil spirits or long processions of ghosts.

With the same indifference he passed the tomb of King Walder, to which so many mournful legends cling, and he heard no voice save the long-drawn sigh of the north wind through those gloomy galleries.

He traversed winding passages, dimly lighted by crevices half stopped with grass and heather. Ever and anon he stumbled over strange objects, which rolled from beneath his foot with a hollow sound, and assumed in the darkness the shape of broken skulls or long rows of white teeth with fleshless gums.

But his soul was undismayed. He was only surprised that he had not yet encountered the much-dreaded inhabitant of this horrible cave.

He reached a sort of circular hall, hewn from the rock. Here the subterranean road which he had thus far followed came to an end, and the rocky walls were without exit, save for a few wide fissures, through which he saw the mountains and woods outside.

Amazed that he should have thus traversed the fatal cavern in vain, he began to despair of finding the brigand. A singular monument in the middle of the underground hall caught his attention. Three long, massive boulders, standing upright, supported a fourth, broad and square, as

three pillars might uphold a roof. Beneath this gigantic tripod was an altar, also formed of a single block of granite, with a round hole in the middle of its upper surface. Ordener recognized it as one of those colossal Druidic structures which he had often seen in travelling through Norway, the most amazing instances being found in France, at Lokmariaker and Karnak, — wondrous fabrics which have grown old, resting upon the earth like tents pitched for a day, and made solid by their mere weight.

The young man, lost in thought, leaned mechanically against this altar, whose stone lips were stained dark brown, so deep had they drunk of the blood of human victims.

All at once he started. A voice, apparently proceeding from the stone, fell upon his ear “Young man, you come to this place with feet which touch the tomb.”

He rose quickly, and his hand sought his sword, while an echo, clear but faint as the voice of a dying man, repeated: “Young man, you come to this place with feet which touch the tomb.” At this instant a hideous face appeared on the other side of the Druid altar, a face crowned with red hair, and disfigured by a brutal sneer.

“Young man,” it again repeated. “you come to this place with feet which touch the tomb.”

“And with a hand which touches a sword,” calmly responded Ordener.

The monster emerged from beneath the altar, revealing his thick-set, muscular limbs, his wild, blood-stained dress, his hooked hands, and his heavy stone axe.

“It is I,” he cried, with a growl like that of a wild beast.

"And I," answered Ordener.

"I expected you."

"I did more," replied the bold young man; "I sought you out."

The brigand folded his arms.

"Do you know who I am?"

"Yes."

"And you are not frightened?"

"Not now."

"Then you were afraid to come here?" And the monster tossed his head with a look of triumph.

"Afraid I might not find you."

"You bid me defiance, and your feet have trampled on dead bodies!"

"To-morrow they may tread upon your own."

The little man quivered with rage. Ordener stood motionless, in an attitude of haughty calm.

"Take care!" muttered the brigand; "I will burst upon you and rend you as Norwegian hailstones do a lady's parasol."

"Such a shield would be all-sufficient for me."

Something in Ordener's eye seemed to daunt the monster. He plucked the hairs from his mantle, as a tiger might devour grass before it springs upon its prey.

"You teach me what pity means," he said.

"And you teach me what it is to scorn."

"Child, your voice is soft, your face is fair, like the voice and the face of a girl; what death will you choose?"

"Your own."

The small man laughed.

"Know you not that I am a demon, that my spirit is the spirit of Ingulf the Destroyer?"

"I know that you are a robber, that you commit murder for the love of gold."

"You are wrong," broke in the monster; "it is for love of blood."

"Were you not paid by the d'Ahlefelds to slay Captain Dispolsen?"

"What are you talking about? What names are these?"

"Do you not know Captain Dispolsen, whom you killed on Urdal Sands?"

"That may be, but I have forgotten him, as I shall forget you three days hence."

"Do you not know Count d'Ahlefeld, who paid you to steal an iron casket from the captain?"

"D'Ahlefeld! Stay; yes, I know him. I drank his son's blood only yesterday, from my son's skull."

Ordener shuddered with horror.

"Were you not content with your wages?"

"What wages?" asked the brigand.

"Hark ye; the sight of you offends me; I must have done. You stole, a week since, an iron casket from one of your victims, a Munkholm officer, did you not?"

At the word "Munkholm" the brigand started.

"An officer from Munkholm?" he muttered. Then he asked, with a look of surprise, "Are you too an officer from Munkholm?"

"No," said Ordener.

"So much the worse!" and his face clouded.

"Enough of this," rejoined the persistent Ordener; "where is the casket that you stole from the captain?"

The little man meditated for a moment.

"By Ingulf! here's a paltry iron box that occupies many minds. I will promise you there'll not be so much search for that which holds your bones, if ever they be collected in a coffin."

These words, as they showed Ordener that the robber knew the casket to which he referred, revived his hope of obtaining it.

"Tell me what you did with that casket. Is it in Count d'Ahlefeld's possession?"

"No."

"You lie, for you laugh."

"Believe what you will. What matters it to me?"

The monster had assumed a mocking air which awakened Ordener's suspicions. He saw that there was nothing to be done but to rouse him to fury if possible, or to intimidate him.

"Hear me," said he, raising his voice; "you must give me that casket."

The other answered with a savage sneer.

"You must give it to me!" the young man repeated in tones of thunder.

"Are you accustomed to issuing orders to buffaloes and bears?" replied the monster, still sneering.

"I would give this command to the very Devil in hell."

"You may do so ere long, if you like."

Ordener drew his sword, which gleamed in the darkness like a flash of lightning.

"Obey me!"

"Nay," cried Hans, brandishing his axe; "I might have broken your bones and sucked your blood when you first appeared, but I restrained my wrath; I was curious to see the sparrow attack the vulture."

"Wretch," exclaimed Ordener, "defend yourself!"

"'Tis the first time I was ever told to do so," muttered the brigand, gnashing his teeth.

With these words, he sprang upon the granite altar and gathered himself together, like a leopard awaiting the hunter on a high cliff, ready to spring upon him unawares.

From this vantage-ground he glared at the young man, apparently seeking the best side from which to attack him. All would have been over with Ordener had he hesitated an instant. But he gave the brigand no time to consider, and threw himself violently upon him, aiming the point of his sword at his face.

Then began the most fearful fight which imagination can picture. The little man, standing upon the altar, like a statue on its pedestal, looked like one of those horrid idols which, in barbarous ages, received in that same spot impious sacrifices and sacrilegious offerings.

His movements were so rapid that upon whatever side Ordener attacked him, he always met the monster face to face, and encountered his blade. He would have been hewn in pieces at the first onslaught, had he not had the lucky forethought to wrap his mantle loosely around his left arm, so that the greater part of his furious opponent's blows were foiled by this floating shield. Thus for some

moments both made useless though tremendous efforts to wound each other. The small man's fiery gray eyes seemed starting from their sockets. Surprised to meet with such vigorous and bold resistance from a foe apparently so feeble, his savage sneers changed to silent rage. The brutal immobility of the monster's features, and Ordener's dauntless composure contrasted strangely with the swiftness of their motions and the vigor of their attack. Not a sound was heard but the clash of weapons, the young man's quick steps, and the hurried breathing of both adversaries, when the little man uttered a fearful roar. The blade of his axe had caught in the folds of the cloak. He braced himself; he shook his arm frantically, but only succeeded in entangling the handle with the blade in the clinging stuff, which, with every fresh effort, wound itself closer and closer about it.

The dreadful brigand felt the young man's steel upon his breast.

"Once more I ask you," said the triumphant Ordener, "will you give me that iron casket which you stole like a coward?"

The small man was silent for an instant; then he said, with a roar: "Curse you, no!"

Ordener rejoined, still retaining his victorious and threatening attitude: "Consider!"

"No; I tell you no!" repeated the brigand.

The noble youth lowered his sword.

"Well," said he, "release your axe from the folds of my mantle, and let us fight it out."

With a disdainful laugh, the monster answered:—

"Child, you play the generous man, as if I wanted your indulgence!"

Before the astonished Ordener could turn his head, the brigand had placed his foot on the shoulder of his loyal victor, and at one bound stood twelve paces away from him. With another leap he sprang at Ordener, and hung his entire weight upon him, as the panther hangs with teeth and claws to the flanks of the royal lion. His nails dug deep into the young man's shoulders, his bony knees were pressed into his flesh, while his fierce face showed Ordener a bloody mouth and cruel teeth ready to tear him limb from limb. He ceased to speak; no human words issued from his heaving chest; a low roar mingled with hoarse, passionate yells alone expressed his rage. He was more hideous than a wild beast, more monstrous than a demon; he was a man deprived of all semblance of humanity.

Ordener tottered beneath the small man's onslaught, and would have fallen at the unexpected shock, had not one of the heavy pillars of the Druid monument happened to be just behind to sustain him. He stood therefore half overthrown and gasping beneath the weight of his fearful foe. To gain any idea of the horrible spectacle offered at this moment, it must be remembered that all which we have described occurred in far less time than is required to write it.

As we said, the noble youth tottered, but he did not quake. He hastily addressed a farewell thought to Ethel. The thought of his love was like a prayer; it restored his strength. He threw his arms about the monster; then

seizing his sword by the middle of the blade, he pressed the point straight down upon his spine. The wounded brigand uttered a fearful scream, and with a sudden leap, which shook off Ordener, freed himself from his bold adversary's arms, and fell back some paces, taking in his teeth a fragment of the green cloak, which he had bitten in his fury.

He leaped up, supple and agile as a young deer, and the battle began again, for the third time, more terrible than ever. By chance there was, close by, a pile of huge stones over which moss and weeds had grown for centuries undisturbed. Two ordinary men could scarcely have lifted the smallest of these rocks. Hans seized one in both arms and raised it above his head, poising it toward Ordener. His expression was frightful. The stone, flung with great violence, moved heavily through the air; the young man had just time to spring aside. The granite boulder broke to fragments against the subterranean wall with a tremendous noise, which was echoed back for many moments from the depths of the cavern.

Ordener, stunned and amazed, had barely time to recover before a second mass of stone was poised in the brigand's grasp. Vexed that he should seem to stand like a coward to be pelted, he rushed toward the small man, with uplifted sword, to change this mode of warfare; but the fearful missile, launched like a thunderbolt, as it moved through the dense, dark air of the cave encountered the bare and slender blade; the steel was dashed to pieces like a bit of glass, and the monster's fierce laugh rang out. Ordener was disarmed.

"Have you," cried the monster, "aught to say to God or the Devil ere you die?"

And his eye darted flame, and all his muscles swelled with rage and joy, and he flung himself with a thrill of impatience upon his axe, which, wrapped in the cloak, lay upon the ground. Poor Ethel!

All at once a distant roar was heard outside. The monster paused. The noise increased; shouts of men were mingled with the plaintive moan of a bear. The brigand listened. The cries of pain continued. He hastily seized his axe, and sprang, not toward Ordener, but toward one of the crevices in the rock. Ordener, overwhelmed with surprise to find himself thus unnoticed, hurried in his turn to one of these natural doors, and saw in a neighboring glade a large white bear at bay, surrounded by seven hunters, among whom he thought he recognized Kennybol, whose words had made such an impression upon him the night before.

He turned back. The brigand had left the cave, and a fearful voice outside shouted: "Friend! Friend! I am here! I am here!"



XXX.

Peter, good fellow, has lost his all at dice. — RÉGNIER.

THE regiment of musketeers from Munkholm was on the march through the narrow passes lying between Thronhjelm and Skongen. Sometimes it moved along the brink of a torrent, and the long line of bayonets crept through the ravine like a huge serpent with glittering scales; sometimes it wound around a mountain, making it look like one of those triumphal columns about which curves an army of heroes in bronze.

The soldiers marched with trailing weapons and cloaks dragging in the dust, looking surly and tired, for these noble fellows are averse to anything but battle or inaction. The coarse banter and threadbare jests which delighted them but yesterday had lost their savor. The air was

chill, the sky clouded. Nothing would raise a laugh in the ranks, unless one of the sutler-women should get an awkward tumble from her little Barbary horse, or a tin saucepan should happen to roll over the precipice and rebound from rock to rock.

To while away the monotony of the journey, Lieutenant Randmer, a young Danish baron, accosted old Captain Lory, who had risen from the ranks. The captain, moody and silent, moved with a heavy but confident step; the lieutenant, light and agile, played with a twig which he had plucked from the bushes that lined the road.

"Well, Captain, what ails you? You seem depressed."

"And I should say I had good cause," replied the old officer, without raising his eyes.

"Come, come, no regrets! Look at me. Am I depressed? And yet I would wager that I have quite as much cause as you."

"I doubt it, Baron Randmer; I have lost all I possessed; I have lost everything I loved."

"Captain Lory, our misfortunes are precisely the same. It is not a fortnight since Lieutenant Alberick won my castle and estate at a single deal of the cards. I am ruined; but am I the less gay?"

The captain answered in a very melancholy tone: "Lieutenant, you have only lost your castle; but I have lost my dog."

At this answer the light-minded baron seemed uncertain whether to laugh or sympathize; but he said: "Be comforted, Captain. Only think, I, who have lost my castle —"

The captain broke in upon his words:—

“What of that? Besides, you may win back another castle.”

“And you may find another dog”

The old man shook his head.

“I may find another dog, but I shall never find my poor Drake.”

He paused; great tears gathered in his eyes and rolled one by one down his hard, stern face.

“He was all I ever had to love,” he added; “I never knew my parents. God grant them peace, and my poor Drake too! Lieutenant Randmer, he saved my life in the Pomeranian war. I called him Drake in honor of the famous admiral. My good dog! He never changed, as did my fortunes. After the battle of Oholfen, the great General Schack patted him, and said: ‘You’ve a fine dog there, Sergeant Lory!’—for I was only a sergeant then.”

“Ah!” interrupted the young baron, slashing his switch, “how queer it must seem to be a sergeant.”

The old soldier of fortune did not hear him; he appeared to be talking to himself, and Randmer could only catch a word here and there.

“Poor Drake! After surviving so many breaches and trenches, to be drowned like a blind kitten in that confounded Throndhjem fjord! My poor dog! my trusty friend! You deserved to die on the field of battle, as I hope to do.”

“Come, come, Captain!” cried the lieutenant, “how can you be so despondent? We may get a chance to fight to-morrow.”

"Yes," contemptuously answered the old captain, "with a pretty enemy!"

"What! do you despise those rascally miners, those devilish mountaineers?"

"Stone-cutters, highwaymen, fellows who don't know the first rudiments of warfare! A fine set of blackguards to face a man like me, who has served in all the wars in Pomerania and Holstein, in the campaigns of Scania and Dalecarlia; who fought under the glorious General Schack and the brave Count Guldenlew!"

"But don't you know," interrupted Randmer, "that these fellows are led by a formidable chief,—a giant as big and as brutal as Goliath, a rascal who drinks nothing but human blood, a very Satan incarnate?"

"And who may he be?" asked the captain.

"Why, the famous Hans of Iceland!"

"Pooh! I'll wager that this great general does not know how to shoulder a musket or handle a carbine properly."

Randmer laughed.

"Yes, you may laugh," continued the captain. "It will be very funny, no doubt, to cross swords with scurvy pick-axes, and pikes with pitchforks! Here are worthy foes indeed! My brave Drake would have scorned to snap at their heels!"

The captain was still giving free vent to his indignation, when he was interrupted by the arrival of an officer, who ran up to them all out of breath, —

"Captain Lory! my dear Randmer!"

"Well?" asked both at once.

"My friends, I am faint with horror! D'Ahlefeld,

Lieutenant d'Ahlefeld, the lord chancellor's son! You know, my dear Randmer, that Frederic — such a dandy! such a fop!"

"Yes," replied the young baron, "a great dandy! Still, at the last ball at Charlottenburg my costume was in much better taste than his. But what has happened to him?"

"I know whom you mean," said Lory; "you mean Frederic d'Ahlefeld, lieutenant of Company Three. The men wear blue facings. He neglects his duty sadly."

"You will not have to complain of him again, Captain Lory."

"Why not?" said Randmer.

"He is garrisoned at Wahlstrom," coldly added the old officer.

"Exactly," said the new-comer; "the colonel has just received a message. Poor Frederic!"

"But what has happened? Captain Bollar, you alarm me."

Old Lory added: "Nonsense! The popinjay was absent from roll-call, I suppose, and the captain has sent the lord chancellor's son to prison: that is the misfortune which distresses you so sadly; I am sure it is."

Bollar clapped him on the shoulder.

"Captain Lory, Lieutenant d'Ahlefeld has been devoured alive."

The two captains looked each other in the face; and Randmer, startled for an instant, suddenly burst out laughing.

"Oh, Captain Bollar, I see you are as fond of a joke as ever! But you can't fool me in that way, I warn you."

And the lieutenant, folding his arms, gave way to mirth, swearing that what amused him the most was to see how readily Lory swallowed all Bollar's ridiculous stories. As for the story, he said it was a capital one; and it was a most clever idea to pretend that Frederic, who took such dainty, such absurd care of his complexion, had been swallowed raw.

"Randmer," said Bollar, seriously, "you act like a fool. I tell you d'Ahlefeld is dead; I have it from the colonel, — dead!"

"Oh, how well you play your part!" rejoined the baron, still laughing; "what a funny fellow you are!"

Bollar shrugged his shoulders, and turned to old Lory, who quietly asked the particulars.

"Oh, yes, my dear Captain Bollar," added the irrepressible mocker; "tell us who ate the poor devil. Did he serve as breakfast for a wolf, or supper for a bear?"

"The colonel," said Bollar, "received a despatch just now, informing him, in the first place, that the Wahlstrom garrison is retreating toward us, driven back by a large party of rebels."

Old Lory frowned.

"In the second place," resumed Bollar, "that Lieutenant Frederic d'Ahlefeld, having gone into the mountains three days since to hunt, was captured near Arbar ruins by a monster, who carried him to his lair and there devoured him."

At this, Lieutenant Randmer's merriment increased.

"Oh, how our good Lory swallows your stories! That's right; keep up a sober face, Bollar. You are wonderfully

amusing; but you don't tell us what this monster, this ogre, this vampire was, that carried off and ate up the lieutenant like a week-old kid!"

"I will not tell you," impatiently answered Bollar; "but I will tell Lory, who is not such an incredulous fool. Lory, my dear fellow, the monster who drank Frederic's blood was Hans of Iceland."

"The leader of the rebels!" exclaimed the old officer.

"Well, Lory," rejoined the scoffer, "do you think a man who handles his jaw so ably needs to know how to shoulder a musket?"

"Baron Randmer," said Bollar, "you are very like d'Ahlefeld in character; beware lest you meet with the same fate."

"I declare," cried Randmer, "that Captain Bollar's immovable gravity amuses me beyond expression."

"And Lieutenant Randmer's inexhaustible laughter alarms me more than I can say."

At this moment a group of officers, engaged in eager conversation, approached our three speakers.

"Zounds!" cried Randmer, "I must amuse them with Bollar's story."

"Comrades," he added, advancing to meet them; "have you heard the news? Poor Frederic d'Ahlefeld has been eaten alive by the barbarous Hans of Iceland."

As he said these words, he could not repress a burst of laughter, which, to his great surprise, was received by the new-comers almost with shouts of indignation.

"What! can you laugh? I did not think, Randmer, that you would repeat such a dreadful piece of news so lightly. How can you laugh at such a misfortune?"

"What!" said Randmer, much confused; "is it really true?"

"Why, you just told us of it yourself!" was the general cry. "Don't you believe your own words?"

"But I thought it was one of Bollar's jokes."

An old officer interposed.

"Such a joke would be in very bad taste; but unfortunately it is no joke. Baron Vœthaün, our colonel, has just received the sad news."

"A fearful affair! It is really awful!" repeated a dozen voices.

"So we are to fight wolves and bears with human faces," said one.

"We are to be shot down," said another, "without knowing whence the bullet comes; we are to be picked off one by one, like birds in a cage."

"D'Ahlefeld's death," said Bollar, in a solemn tone, "makes me shudder. Our regiment is unlucky. Dispol-sen's murder, that of those poor soldiers found dead at Cascadthymore, d'Ahlefeld's awful fate,—here are three tragic events in a very short space of time."

Young Baron Randmer, who had been silent, looked up.

"It is incredible," said he; "Frederic, who danced so well!"

And after this weighty remark he relapsed into silence, while Captain Lory declared that he was greatly distressed at the young lieutenant's death, and drew the attention of private Toric-Belfast to the fact that the brass clasp of his shoulder-belt was not so bright as usual.



XXXI.

"Hush, hush ! here comes a man climbing down a ladder."

"Oh, yes ; he is a spy."

"Heaven could grant me no greater favor than to let me offer you — my life. I am yours ; but tell me, for mercy's sake, to whom does this army belong ?"

"To a count from Barcelona."

"What count ?"

"What is it ?"

"General, one of the enemy's spies."

"Whence come you ?"

"I came here, little dreaming what I should find ; little thinking what I should see." — LOPE DE VEGA : *La Fuerza Lastimosa*.

THERE is something desolate and forbidding in the aspect of a bare, flat region when the sun has set, when one is alone ; when, as he walks, he tramples the dry grass beneath his feet, the dead brown leaves drop rustling from the trees, he hears the monotonous cry of

the cricket, and sees huge, shapeless clouds sink slowly on the horizon like dead ghosts.

Such were Ordener's gloomy reflections on the night of his vain encounter with the Iceland robber. Startled by his abrupt disappearance, he at first tried to pursue him; but he lost his way in the heather, and wandered all day through a wild and uncultivated country, where he found no trace of man. At nightfall he was in a vast plain stretching to the horizon on every side, where there seemed no hope of shelter for the young traveller exhausted by fatigue and hunger.

It would have been a slight relief if his bodily suffering had not been aggravated by mental distress; but all was over. He had reached his journey's end without accomplishing his purpose. He could not even cherish those foolish illusions of hope which had urged him to pursue the monster; and now that nothing was left to sustain his courage, countless discouraging thoughts, for which he had hitherto had no room, assailed him. What could he do? How could he return to Schumacker unless he could take with him Ethel's salvation? What was the frightful nature of the misfortune which the possession of the fatal casket would prevent, and what of his marriage to Ulrica d'Ahlefeld? If he could only free his Ethel from her undeserved captivity; if he could fly with her, and enjoy uninterrupted happiness in some distant exile!

He wrapped himself in his mantle, and threw himself upon the ground. The sky was dark; a tempestuous light ever and anon appeared in the clouds as if through a veil of crape and then vanished; a cold wind swept across the

plain. The young man scarcely heeded these signs of an immediate and violent storm; and besides, even could he have found shelter from the tempest and a place to rest from his fatigues, could he have found a spot where he might avoid his misery or rest from thought?

All at once confused sounds of men's voices fell upon his ear. In surprise, he rose upon his elbow, and perceived at some distance a number of shadowy forms moving through the darkness. He looked again; a light shone in the midst of the mysterious group, and Ordener, with astonishment which may easily be imagined, saw the weird forms sink one after the other into the centre of the earth, until all had disappeared.

Ordener was above the superstitions of his age and country. His serious and mature mind knew none of those vain beliefs, those strange terrors, which torture the childhood of a race as well as the childhood of a man. And yet there was something supernatural about this singular vision which filled him with devout distrust against his better judgment; for who can tell whether the spirits of the dead may not sometimes return to earth?

He rose, made the sign of the cross, and walked toward the spot where the apparition vanished.

Big drops of rain now began to fall; his cloak filled like a sail, and the feather in his cap, beaten by the wind, flapped in his face.

He stopped suddenly. A flash of lightning revealed just at his feet a large, round well, into which he must inevitably have fallen headlong had it not have been for this friendly warning. He approached the abyss. A

faint light was visible at a fearful depth, and cast a red glow over the bottom of this huge opening in the bowels of the earth. The light, which seemed like a magic fire kindled by elves, only increased the immeasurable darkness which the eye was forced to pierce before reaching it.

The dauntless youth leaned over the abyss and listened. A distant murmur of voices rose to his ear. He no longer doubted that the beings who had so strangely appeared and disappeared before his very eyes had plunged into this gulf, and he felt an unconquerable desire, doubtless because it was so fated, to follow them, even should he pursue spectres to the mouth of hell. Moreover, the tempest now burst with fury, and this hole would afford him a shelter; but how was he to descend? What road had those he longed to follow taken, if indeed they were not phantoms? A second flash came to his aid, and showed him at his feet a ladder leading into the depths of the well. It consisted of a strong upright beam, crossed at regular intervals by short iron bars for the hands and feet of those who might venture into the gulf below.

Ordener did not hesitate. He swung himself boldly down upon the dreadful ladder, and plunged into the abyss without knowing whether it reached the bottom or not,—without reflecting that he might never again see the sun. Soon he could only distinguish the sky from the darkness overhead by the bluish flashes which lit it up at brief intervals; soon the rain pouring in torrents upon the surface of the earth, reached him merely as a fine, vaporous mist. Then the whirlwind, rushing violently into the

well, was lost above him in a prolonged moan. He went down and down, and yet seemed scarcely nearer to the subterranean light. He went on without losing heart, never looking below lest he should become dizzy and fall.

However, the air becoming more and more stifling, the sound of voices more and more distinct, and the purplish glow which began to tinge the walls of the pit, warned him that he was not far from the bottom. He descended a few more rounds, and saw plainly at the foot of the ladder the entrance to an underground passage lighted by a flickering red flame, while his ear caught words which won his entire attention.

"Kennybol does not come," said an impatient voice.

"What can detain him?" repeated the same voice, after a brief pause.

"No one knows, Mr. Hacket," was the reply.

"He intended to spend the night with his sister, Maase Braal, in the village of Surb," added a different voice.

"You see," rejoined the first speaker, "I keep my promises. I agreed to bring Hans of Iceland for your leader. I have brought him."

An indistinct murmur followed these words. Ordener's curiosity, already aroused by the name of Kennybol, who had so astonished him the night before, was redoubled at the name of Hans of Iceland.

The same voice continued:—

"My friends, Jonas, Norbith, what matters it if Kennybol is late? There are enough of us; we need fear nothing. Did you find your standards at Crag ruins?"

"Yes, Mr. Hacket," replied several voices.

"Well, raise your banners; it is high time! Here is gold! Here is your invincible chief! Courage! March to the rescue of the noble Schumacker, the unfortunate Count Griffenfeld!"

"Hurrah! hurrah for Schumacker!" repeated many voices; and the name of Schumacker echoed and re-echoed from the subterranean arches.

Ordener, more and more curious, more and more amazed, listened, hardly daring to breathe. He could neither believe nor understand what he heard. Schumacker connected with Kennybol and Hans of Iceland! What was this dark drama, one scene in which he, an unsuspected spectator, had witnessed? Whose life did they wish to shield? Whose head was at stake?

"In me," continued the same voice, "you see the friend and confidant of the noble Count Griffenfeld."

The voice was wholly unfamiliar to Ordener. It went on: "Put implicit trust in me, as he does. Friends, everything is in your favor; you will reach Throndhjem without meeting an enemy."

"Let us be off, Mr. Hacket," interrupted a voice. "Peters told me that he saw the whole regiment from Munkholm marching through the mountain-passes to attack us."

"He deceived you," replied the other, in authoritative tones. "The government as yet knows nothing of your revolt, and it is so wholly unsuspecting that the man who rejected your just complaints—your oppressor, the oppressor of the illustrious and unfortunate Schumacker, General Levin de Knud—has left Throndhjem for the

capital, to join in the festivities on the occasion of the marriage of his ward, Ordener Guldenlew, and Ulrica d'Ahlefeld."

Ordener's feelings may be imagined. To hear all these names which interested him so deeply, and even his own, uttered by unknown voices in this wild, desolate region, in this mysterious tunnel! A frightful thought pierced his soul. Could it be true? Was it indeed an agent of Count Griffenfeld whose voice he heard? What! could Schumacker, that venerable old man, his noble Ethel's noble father, revolt against his royal master, hire brigands, and kindle a civil war? And it was for this hypocrite, this rebel, that he, the son of the Norwegian viceroy, the pupil of General Levin, had compromised his future and risked his life! It was for his sake that he had sought and fought with that Iceland bandit with whom Schumacker seemed to be in league, since he placed him at the head of these scoundrels! Who knows but that casket for which he, Ordener, was on the point of shedding his lifeblood, contained some of the base secrets of this vile plot? Or had the revengeful prisoner of Munkholm made a fool of him? Perhaps he had found out his name; perhaps — and this thought was painful indeed to the generous youth — he wished to ruin the son of an enemy by urging him to this fatal journey!

Alas! when we have long loved and revered the name of an unfortunate man, when in our secret soul we have vowed everlasting devotion to his misfortunes, it is bitter to be repaid with ingratitude, to feel that we are forever disenchanted with generosity, and that we must renounce

the pure, sweet joys of loyal self-sacrifice. We grow old in an instant with the most melancholy form of old age; we grow old in experience, and we lose the most beautiful illusion of a life whose only beauty lies in its illusions.

Such were the dispiriting thoughts that crowded confusedly upon Ordener's mind. The noble youth longed to die at that instant; he felt that his happiness had vanished. True, there were many things in the assertions of the man who described himself as Griffenfeld's envoy which struck him as false or doubtful; but these statements, being only meant to deceive a set of poor rustics, Schumacker was but the more guilty in his eyes; and this same Schumacker was his Ethel's father!

These reflections agitated him the more violently because they all thronged upon him at once. He reeled against the rounds of the ladder on which he stood, and listened still; for we sometimes wait with inexplicable impatience and fearful eagerness for the misfortunes which we dread the most.

"Yes," added the voice of the envoy, "you are to be commanded by the much-dreaded Hans of Iceland. Who will dare resist you? You fight for your wives and your children, basely despoiled of their inheritance; for a noble and unfortunate man, who for twenty years has languished unjustly in an infamous prison. Come, for Schumacker and liberty await you. Death to tyrants!"

"Death!" repeated a thousand voices; and the clash of arms rang through the winding cave, mingled with the hoarse note of the mountaineer's horn.

"Stop!" cried Ordener.

He hurriedly descended the remainder of the ladder; for the idea that he might save Schumacker from committing a crime and spare his country untold misery had taken entire possession of him. But as he stood at the mouth of the cave, fear lest he might destroy his Ethel's father, and perhaps his Ethel herself, by rash invectives, took the place of every other consideration, and he remained rooted to the spot, pale, and casting an amazed glance at the singular scene before him.

It was like a vast square in some underground city, whose limits were lost amid endless columns supporting the vaulted roof. These pillars glittered like crystal in the rays of countless torches borne by a multitude of men, armed with strange weapons, and scattered in confusion about the cave. From all these points of light and all these fearful figures straying among the shadows, it might have passed for one of the legendary gatherings described by ancient chroniclers,—an assembly of wizards and demons, bearing stars for torches, and illuminating antique groves and ruined castles by night.

A prolonged shout arose.

"A stranger! Kill him! kill him!"

A hundred arms were raised to strike Ordener down. He put his hand to his side in search of his sword. Noble youth! In his generous ardor he had forgotten that he was alone and unarmed.

"Stay! stay!" cried a voice,—the voice of one whom Ordener recognized as Schumacker's envoy.

He was a short, stout man, dressed in black, with a

deceitful smile. He advanced toward Ordener, saying: "Who are you?"

Ordener made no answer; he was threatened on every side, and there was not an inch of his breast uncovered by a sword-point or the mouth of a pistol.

"Are you afraid?" asked the little man, with a sneer.

"If your hand were upon my heart, instead of these swords," coldly answered Ordener, "you would see that it beats no faster than your own, if indeed you have a heart."

"Ah, ha!" said the little man; "so you defy us! Well, then let him die!" And he turned his back.

"Give me death," returned Ordener; "it is the only thing that I would accept from you."

"One moment, Mr. Hacket," said an old man, with a thick beard, who stood leaning on a long musket. "You are my guests, and I alone have the right to send this fellow to tell the dead what he has seen."

Mr. Hacket laughed.

"Faith, my dear Jonas, let it be as you please! It matters little to me who judges this spy, so long as he is condemned."

The old man turned to Ordener.

"Come, tell us who you are, since you are so boldly curious to know who we are."

Ordener was silent. Surrounded by the strange allies of that Schumacker for whom he would so willingly have shed his blood, he felt only an infinite longing to die.

"His worship will not answer," said the old man.

"When the fox is caught, he cries no more. Kill him!"

"My brave Jonas," rejoined Hacket, "let this man's death be Hans of Iceland's first exploit among you."

"Yes, yes!" cried many voices.

Ordener, astounded, but still undaunted, looked about him for Hans of Iceland, with whom he had so valiantly disputed his life that very morning, and saw with increased surprise a man of colossal size, dressed in the garb of the mountaineers. This giant stared at Ordener with brutal stupidity, and called for an axe.

"You are not Hans of Iceland!" emphatically exclaimed Ordener.

"Kill him! kill him!" cried Hacket, angrily.

Ordener saw that he must die. He put his hand in his bosom to draw out his Ethel's hair and give it one last kiss. As he did so, a paper fell from his belt.

"What is that paper?" asked Hacket. "Norbith, seize that paper."

Norbith was a young man, whose stern, dark features bore the stamp of true nobility. He picked up the paper and unfolded it. "Good God!" he exclaimed, "it is the passport of my poor friend, Christopher Nedlam, that unfortunate fellow who was beheaded not a week ago in Skongen market-place, for coining counterfeit money."

"Well," said Hacket, in a disappointed tone, "you may keep the bit of paper. I thought it was something more important. Come, my dear Hans, despatch your man."

Young Norbith threw himself before Ordener, crying: "This man is under my protection. My head shall fall

before you touch a hair of his. I will not suffer the safe-conduct of my friend Christopher Nedlam to be violated."

Ordener, so miraculously preserved, hung his head and felt humiliated; for he remembered how contemptuously he had inwardly received Chaplain Athanasius Munder's touching prayer, — "May the gift of the dying benefit the traveller!"

"Pooh! pooh!" said Hacket, "you talk nonsense, good Norbith. The man is a spy; he must die."

"Give me my axe," repeated the giant.

"He shall not die!" cried Norbith. "What would the spirit of my poor Nedlam say, whom they hung in such cowardly fashion? I tell you he shall not die; for Nedlam will not let him die!"

"As far as that goes," said old Jonas, "Norbith is right. Why should we kill this stranger, Mr. Hacket? He has Christopher Nedlam's pass."

"But he is a spy, a spy!" repeated Hacket.

The old man took his stand with the young one at Ordener's side, and both said quietly: "He has the pass of Christopher Nedlam, who was hung at Skongen."

Hacket saw that he must needs submit; for all the others began to murmur, and to say that this stranger should not die, as he had the safe-conduct of Nedlam the counterfeiter.

"Very well," he hissed through his teeth with concentrated rage; "then let him live. After all, it is your business, and not mine."

"If he were the Devil himself I would not kill him," said the triumphant Norbith.

With these words he turned to Ordener.

"Look here," he added, "you must be a good fellow as you have my poor friend Nedlam's pass. We are the royal miners. We have rebelled to rid ourselves of the protectorate of the Crown. Mr. Hacket, here, says that we have taken up arms for a certain Count Schumacker; but I for one know nothing about him. Stranger, our cause is just. Hear me, and answer as if you were answering your patron saint. Will you join us?"

An idea flashed through Ordener's mind.

"Yes," replied he.

Norbith offered him a sword, which Ordener silently accepted.

"Brother," said the youthful leader; "if you mean to betray us, begin by killing me."

At this instant the sound of the horn rang through the arched galleries of the mine, and distant voices were heard exclaiming, "Here comes Kennybol!"

XXXII.

There are thoughts as high as heaven. — *Old Spanish Romance.*

THE soul sometimes has sudden inspirations, brilliant flashes whose extent can no more be expressed, whose depth can no more be sounded by an entire volume of thoughts and reflections, than the brightness of a thousand torches can reproduce the intense, swift radiance of a flash of lightning.

We will not, therefore, try to analyze the overwhelming and secret impulse which upon young Norbith's proposal led the noble son of the Norwegian viceroy to join a party of bandits who had risen in revolt to defend a proscribed man. It was doubtless a generous desire to fathom this dark scheme at any cost, mixed with a bitter loathing for life, a reckless indifference to the future; perhaps some vague doubt of Schumacker's guilt, inspired by all the various incidents which struck the young man as equivocal and false, by a strange instinct for the truth, and above all by his love for Ethel. In short, it was certainly a secret sense of the help which a clear-sighted friend, in the midst of his blind partisans, might render Schumacker.

XXXIII.

Is that the chief? His look alarms me ; I dare not speak to him. —
MATURIN : *Bertram.*

ON hearing the shouts which announced the arrival of the famous hunter Kennybol, Hacket sprang forward to meet him, leaving Ordener with the two other leaders.

“Here you are at last, my dear Kennybol ! Come, let me present you to your much-dreaded commander, Hans of Iceland.”

At this name, Kennybol, pale, breathless, his hair standing on end, his face bathed in perspiration, and his hands stained with blood, started back.

“Hans of Iceland !”

“Come,” said Hacket, “don’t be alarmed ! He is here to help you. You must look upon him as a friend and comrade.”

Kennybol did not heed him.

“Hans of Iceland here !” he repeated.

“To be sure,” said Hacket, with ill-suppressed laughter ; “are you afraid of him ?”

“What !” for the third time interrupted the hunter ; “do you really mean it, — is Hans of Iceland here, in this mine ?”

Hacket turned to the bystanders: "Has our brave Kennybol lost his wits?"

Then, addressing Kennybol: "I see that it was your dread of Hans of Iceland which made you so late."

Kennybol raised his hands to heaven.

"By Ethelreda, the holy Norwegian saint and martyr, it was not fear of Hans of Iceland, but Hans of Iceland himself, I swear, that delayed me so long."

These words caused a murmur of surprise to run through the crowd of miners and mountaineers surrounding the two speakers, and clouded Hacket's face as the sight and the rescue of Ordener had but a moment before.

"What! What do you mean?" he asked, dropping his voice.

"I mean, Mr. Hacket, that but for your confounded Hans of Iceland I should have been here before the owl's first hoot."

"Indeed! and what did he do to you?"

"Oh, do not ask me. I only hope that my beard may turn as white as an ermine's skin in a single day if I am ever caught again hunting a white bear, since I escaped this time with my life."

"Did you come near being eaten by a bear?"

Kennybol shrugged his shoulders contemptuously.

"A bear! a terrible foe that would be! Kennybol eaten by a bear! For what do you take me, Mr. Hacket?"

"Oh, pardon me!" said Hacket, with a smile.

"If you knew what had happened to me, good sir,"

interrupted the old hunter, in a low voice, "you would not persist in telling me that Hans of Iceland is here."

Hacket again seemed embarrassed. He seized Kennybol abruptly by the arm, as if he feared lest he should approach the spot where the giant's huge head now loomed up above those of the miners.

"My dear Kennybol," said he, solemnly, "tell me, I entreat you, what caused your delay. You must understand that at this time anything may be of the utmost importance."

"That is true," said Kennybol, after a brief pause.

Then, yielding to Hacket's repeated requests, he told him how that very morning, aided by six comrades, he had pursued a white bear into the immediate vicinity of Walderhog cave, without noticing, in the excitement of the chase, that they were so near that dreadful place; how the growls of the bear at bay had attracted a little man, a monster, or demon, who, armed with a stone axe, had rushed upon them to defend the bear. The appearance of this devil, who could be no other than Hans, the demon of Iceland, had petrified all seven of them with terror. Finally, his six companions had fallen victims to the two monsters, and he, Kennybol, only owed his safety to speedy flight, assisted by his own nimbleness, Hans of Iceland's fatigue, and above all, by the protection of that blessed patron saint of hunters, Saint Sylvester.

"You see, Mr. Hacket," he concluded his tale, which was still somewhat incoherent from fright, and adorned

with all the flowers of the mountain dialect,—“you see that if I am late you should not blame me, and that it is impossible for the demon of Iceland, whom I left this morning with his bear wreaking their fury upon the corpses of my six poor friends on Walderhog heath, to be here now in the guise of a friend. I protest that it cannot be. I know him now, that fiend incarnate; I have seen him!”

Hacket, who had listened attentively, said gravely: “My brave friend Kennybol, nothing is impossible to Hans or to the Devil; I knew all this before.”

The savage features of the old hunter from the mountains of Kiölen assumed an expression of extreme amazement and childlike credulity. “What!” he exclaimed.

“Yes,” added Hacket, in whose face a more skilful observer might have read grim triumph; “I knew it all, except that you were the hero of this unfortunate adventure. Hans of Iceland told me the whole story on our way here.”

“Really!” said Kennybol; and he gazed at Hacket with respect and awe.

Hacket continued with the same perfect composure: “To be sure. But now calm yourself; I will present you to this dreadful Hans of Iceland.”

Kennybol uttered an exclamation of fright.

“Be calm, I say,” repeated Hacket. “Consider him as your friend and leader; but be careful not to remind him in any way of what occurred this morning. Do you understand?”

Resistance was useless ; but it was not without a severe mental struggle that he agreed to be presented to the demon. They advanced to the group where Ordener stood with Jonas and Norbith.

"May God guard you, good Jonas, dear Norbith !" said Kennybol.

"We need his protection, Kennybol," said Jonas.

At this instant Kennybol's eye met that of Ordener, who was trying to attract his attention.

"Ah ! there you are, young man," said he, going up to him eagerly and offering him his hard, wrinkled hand ; "welcome ! It seems that your courage met with its reward."

Ordener, who could not imagine how this mountaineer happened to understand him so well, was about to ask an explanation, when Norbith exclaimed : "Then you know this stranger, Kennybol ?"

"By my patron saint, I do ! I love and esteem him. He is devoted, like ourselves, to the good cause which we all serve."

And he cast another meaning look at Ordener, which the latter was on the point of answering, when Hacket, who had gone in search of his giant, whose company all the insurgents seemed to avoid, came up to our four friends, saying : "Kennybol, my valiant hunter, here is your leader, the famous Hans of Klipstadur !"

Kennybol glanced at the huge brigand with more surprise than terror, and whispered in Hacket's ear : "Mr. Hacket, the Hans of Iceland whom I met this morning was a short man."

Hackët answered in low tones : " You forget, Kennybol ; he is a demon ! "

" True," said the credulous hunter ; " I suppose he has changed his shape."

And he turned aside with a shudder to cross himself secretly.



XXXIV.

The mask approaches ; it is Angelo himself. The rascal knows his business well ; he must be sure of his facts. — LESSING.

IN a dark grove of old oaks, whose dense leaves the pale light of dawn can scarcely penetrate, a short man approaches another man who is alone, and seems to be waiting for him. The following conversation begins in low tones : —

“Your worship must excuse me for keeping you waiting ; several things detained me.”

“Such as what ?”

“The leader of the mountain men, Kennybol, did not reach the appointed place until midnight ; and we were also disturbed by an unlooked-for witness.”

“Who ?”

"A fellow who thrust himself like a fool into the mine in the midst of our secret meeting. At first I took him for a spy, and would have put him to death; but he turned out to be the bearer of a safe-conduct from some gallows-bird held in great respect by our miners, and they instantly took him under their protection. When I came to consider the matter, I made up my mind that he was probably a curious traveller or a learned fool. At any rate, I have taken all necessary precautions in regard to him."

"Is everything else going well?"

"Very well. The miners from Guldbrandsdal and the Färöe Islands, led by young Norbith and old Jonas, with the mountain men from Kiölen, under Kennybol, are probably on the march at this moment. Four miles from Blue Star, their comrades from Hubfallo and Sund-Moer will join them; those from Kongsberg and the iron-workers from Lake Miösen, who have already compelled the Wahlstrom garrison to retreat, as your lordship knows, will await them a few miles farther on; and finally, my dear and honored master, these combined forces will halt for the night some two miles away from Skongen, in the gorges of Black Pillar."

"But how did they receive your Hans of Iceland?"

"With perfect confidence."

"Would that I could avenge my son's death on that monster! What a pity that he should escape us!"

"My noble lord, first use Hans of Iceland's name to wreak your revenge upon Schumacker; then it will be time enough to think of vengeance against Hans himself."

The insurgents will march all day, and halt to-night in Black Pillar Pass, two miles from Skongen."

"What! can you venture to let so large a force advance so close to Skongen? Musdæmon, take care!"

"You are suspicious, noble Count. Your worship may send a messenger at once to Colonel Væthain, whose regiment is probably at Skongen now; inform him that the rebel forces will encamp to-night in Black Pillar Pass, and have no misgivings. The place seems made purposely for ambuscades."

"I understand you; but why, my dear fellow, did you muster the rebels in such numbers?"

"The greater the insurrection, sir, the greater will be Schumacker's crime and your merit. Besides, it is important that it should be crushed at a single blow."

"Very good; but why did you order them to halt so near Skongen?"

"Because it is the only spot in the mountains where all resistance is impossible. None will ever leave it alive but those whom we select to appear before the court."

"Capital! Something tells me, Musdæmon, to finish this business quickly. If all looks well in this quarter, it looks stormy in another. You know that we have been making secret search at Copenhagen for the papers which we feared had fallen into the possession of Dispolsen?"

"Well, sir?"

"Well, I have just discovered that the scheming fellow

had mysterious relations with that accursed astrologer, Cumbysulsum."

"Who died recently?"

"Yes; and that the old sorcerer delivered certain papers to Schumacker's agent before he died."

"Damnation! He had letters of mine, — a statement of our plot!"

"*Your* plot, Musdæmon!"

"A thousand pardons, noble Count! But why did your worship put yourself in the power of such a humbug as Cumbysulsum? — the old traitor!"

"You see, Musdæmon, I am not a sceptic and unbeliever, like you. It is not without good reason, my dear fellow, that I have always put my trust in old Cumbysulsum's magic skill."

"I wish your worship had had as much doubt of his loyalty as you had trust in his skill. However, let us not take fright too soon, noble master. Dispolsen is dead, his papers are lost; in a few days we shall be safely rid of those whom they might benefit."

"In any event, what charge could be brought against me?"

"Or me, protected as I am by your Grace?"

"Oh, yes, my dear fellow, of course you can count upon me; but let us bring this business to a head. I will send the messenger to the colonel. Come, my people are waiting for me behind those bushes, and we must return to Throndhjem, which the Mecklenburger must have left ere now. Continue to serve me faithfully, and in spite of all the Cumbysulsums and

Dispölsens upon earth, you can count on me in life and death ! ”

“ I beg your Grace to believe — The Devil ! ”

Here they plunged into the thicket, among whose branches their voices gradually died away ; and soon after, no sound was heard save the tread of their departing steeds.



XXXV.

Beat the drums ! They come, they come ! They have all sworn, and all the same oath, never to return to Castile without the captive count, their lord.

They have his marble statue in a chariot, and are resolved never to turn back until they see the statue itself turn back.

And in token that the first man who retraces his steps will be regarded as a traitor, they have all raised their right hand and taken an oath.

And they marched toward Arlançon as swiftly as the oxen which drag the chariot could go ; they tarry no more than does the sun.

Burgos is deserted ; only the women and children remain behind ; and so too in the suburbs. They talk, as they go, of horses and falcons, and question whether they should free Castile from the tribute she pays Leon.

And before they enter Navarre, they meet upon the frontier. . . .

Old Spanish Romance.

WHILE the preceding conversation was going on in one of the forests on the outskirts of Lake Miösen, the rebels, divided into three columns, left Apsyl-Corh lead-mine by the chief entrance, which opens, on a level with the ground, in a deep ravine.

Orderer, who, in spite of his desire for a closer acquaintance with Kennybol, had been placed under Norbith's command, at first saw nothing but a long line of torches, whose beams, vying with the early light of dawn, were reflected back from hatchets, pitchforks, mattocks, clubs with iron heads, huge hammers, pickaxes, crowbars, and all the rude implements which could be borrowed from their daily toil, mingled with genuine weapons of warfare, such as muskets, pikes, swords, carbines, and guns, which showed that this revolt was a conspiracy. When the sun rose, and the glow of the torches was no more than smoke, he could better observe the aspect of this strange army, which advanced in disorder, with hoarse songs and fierce shouts, like a band of hungry wolves in pursuit of a dead body. It was divided into three parts. First came the mountaineers from Kiölen, under command of Kennybol, whom they all resembled in their dress of wild beasts' skins, and in their bold, savage mien. Then followed the young miners led by Norbith, and the older ones under Jonas, with their broad-brimmed hats, loose trousers, bare arms, and blackened faces, gazing at the sun in mute surprise. Above this noisy band floated a confused sea of scarlet banners, bearing various mottoes, such as, "Long live Schumaeker!" "Let us free our Deliverer!" "Freedom for Miners!" "Liberty for Count Griffenfeld!" "Death to Guldenlew!" "Death to all Oppressors!" "Death to d'Ahlefeld!" The rebels seemed to regard these standards rather in the light of a burden than an ornament, and they were passed frequently from hand to hand when the color-bearers were tired, or desired to mingle the discordant notes

of their horns with the psalm-singing and shouts of their comrades.

The rear-guard of this strange army consisted of ten or a dozen carts drawn by reindeer and strong mules, doubtless meant to carry ammunition; and the vanguard, of the giant, escorted by Hacket, who marched alone, armed with a mace and an axe, followed at a considerable distance, with no small terror, by the men under command of Kennybol, who never took his eyes from him, as if anxious not to lose sight of his diabolical leader during the various transformations which he might be pleased to undergo.

This stream of insurgents poured down the mountain-side with many confused noises, filling the pine woods with the sound of their horns. Their numbers were soon swelled by various reinforcements from Sund-Moer, Hufallo, Kongsberg, and a troop of iron-workers from Lake Miösen, who presented a singular contrast to the rest of the rebels. They were tall, powerful men, armed with hammers and tongs, their broad leather aprons being their only shield, a huge wooden cross their only standard, as they marched soberly and rhythmically, with a regular tread more religious than military, their only war-song being Biblical psalms and canticles. They had no leader but their cross-bearer, who walked before them unarmed.

The rebel troop met not a single human being on their road. As they approached, the goat-herd drove his flocks into a cave, and the peasant forsook his village; for the inhabitant of the valley and plain is everywhere alike,—he fears the bandit's horn as much as the bowman's blast.

Thus they traversed hills and forests, with here and there a small settlement, followed winding roads where traces of wild beasts were more frequent than the footprint of man, skirted lakes, crossed torrents, ravines, and marshes. Ordener recognized none of these places. Once only his eye, as he looked up, caught upon the horizon the dim, blue outline of a great sloping rock. He turned to one of his rude companions, and asked, "My friend, what is that rock to the south, on our right?"

"That is the Vulture's Neck, Oëlmœ Cliff," was the reply.

Ordener sighed heavily.



XXXVI.

God keep and bless you, my daughter. — RÉGNIER.

MONKEY, paroquets, combs, and ribbons, all were ready to receive Lieutenant Frederic. His mother had sent, at great expense, for the famous Scudéry's latest novel. By her order it had been richly bound, with silver-gilt clasps, and placed, with the bottles of perfume and boxes of patches, upon the elegant toilet-table, with gilded feet, and richly inlaid, with which she had furnished her dear son Frederic's future sitting-room. When she had thus fulfilled the careful round of petty maternal cares which had for a moment caused her to forget her hate, she remembered that she had now nothing else to do but to injure Schumacker and Ethel. General Levin's departure left them at her mercy.

So many things had happened recently at Munkholm of which she could learn but little! Who was the serf, vassal, or peasant, who, if she was to credit Frederic's very ambiguous and embarrassed phrases, had won the love of the ex-chancellor's daughter? What were Baron Ordener's relations with the prisoners of Munkholm? What were the incomprehensible motives for Ordener's most peculiar absence at a time when both kingdoms were given over to preparations for his marriage to that Ulrica d'Ahlefeld whom he seemed to disdain? And lastly, what had occurred between Levin de Knud and Schumacker? The countess was lost in conjectures. She finally resolved, in order to clear up all these mysteries, to risk a descent upon Munkholm, — a step to which she was counselled both by her curiosity as a woman and her interests as an enemy.

One evening, as Ethel, alone in the donjon garden, had just written, for the sixth time, with a diamond ring, some mysterious monogram upon the dusty window in the postern gate through which her Ordener had disappeared, it opened. The young girl started. It was the first time that this gate had been opened since it closed upon him.

A tall, pale woman, dressed in white, stood before her. She gave Ethel a smile as sweet as poisoned honey, and behind her mask of quiet friendliness there lurked an expression of hatred, spite, and involuntary admiration.

Ethel looked at her in astonishment, almost fear. Except her old nurse, who had died in her arms, this was the first woman she had seen within the gloomy walls of Munkholm.

"My child," gently asked the stranger, "are you the daughter of the prisoner of Munkholm?"

Ethel could not help turning away her head; she instinctively shrank from the stranger, and she felt as if there were venom in the breath which uttered such sweet tones. She answered: "I am Ethel Schumacker. My father tells me that in my cradle I was called Countess of Tönsberg and Princess of Wollin."

"Your father tells you so!" exclaimed the tall woman, with a sneer which she at once repressed. Then she added: "You have had many misfortunes!"

"Misfortune received me, at my birth, in its cruel arms," replied the youthful captive; "my noble father says that it will never leave me while I live."

A smile flitted across the lips of the stranger, as she rejoined in a pitying tone: "And do you never murmur against those who flung you into this cell? Do you not curse the authors of your misery?"

"No, for fear that our curse might draw down upon their heads evils like those which they make us endure."

"And," continued the pale woman, with unmoved face, "do you know the authors of these evils of which you complain?"

Ethel considered a moment, and said: "All that has happened to us is by the will of Heaven."

"Does your father never speak to you of the king?"

"The king? I pray for him every morning and evening, although I do not know him."

Ethel did not understand why the stranger bit her lip at this reply.

"Does your unhappy father never, in his anger, mention his relentless foes, General Arensdorf, Bishop Spolleyson, and Chancellor d'Ahlefeld?"

"I don't know whom you mean."

"And do you know the name of Levin de Knud?"

The recollection of the scene which had occurred but two days before, between Schumacker and the governor of Throndhjem, was so fresh in Ethel's mind that she could not but be struck by the name of Levin de Knud.

"Levin de Knud?" said she; "I think that he is the man for whom my father feels so much esteem, almost affection."

"What!" cried the tall woman.

"Yes," resumed the girl; "it was Levin de Knud whom my father defended so warmly, day before yesterday, against the governor of Throndhjem."

These words increased her hearer's surprise.

"Against the governor of Throndhjem! Do not trifle with me, girl. I am here in your interests. Your father took General Levin de Knud's part against the governor of Throndhjem, you say?"

"General! I thought he was a captain. But no; you are right. My father," added Ethel, "seemed to feel as much attachment for this General Levin de Knud as dislike for the governor of Throndhjem."

"Here is a strange mystery indeed!" thought the tall, pale woman, whose curiosity increased momentarily. "My dear child, what happened between your father and the governor?"

All these questions wearied poor Ethel, who looked fixedly at the tall woman, saying: "Am I a criminal, that you should cross-examine me thus?"

At these simple words the stranger seemed thunder-struck, as if she saw the reward of her skill slipping through her fingers. She replied, nevertheless, in a tremulous voice: "You would not speak to me so if you knew why and for whom I come."

"What?" said Ethel; "do you come from him? Do you bring me a message from him?" And all the blood in her body rushed to her fair face; her heart throbbed in her bosom with impatience and alarm.

"From whom?" asked the stranger.

The young girl hesitated as she was about to utter the adored name. She saw a flash of wicked joy gleam in the stranger's eye like a ray from hell. She said sadly:—

"You do not know the person whom I mean."

An expression of disappointment again appeared upon the stranger's apparently friendly face.

"Poor young girl" she cried; "what can I do to help you?"

Ethel did not hear her. Her thoughts were beyond the mountains of the North, in quest of the daring traveller. Her head sank upon her breast, and her hands were unconsciously clasped.

"Does your father hope to escape from this prison?"

This question, twice repeated by the stranger, brought Ethel to herself.

"Yes," said she, and tears sparkled on her cheek.

The stranger's eyes flashed.

"He does ! Tell me how ; by what means ; when !"

"He hopes to escape from this prison because he hopes ere long to die."

There is sometimes a power in the very simplicity of a gentle young spirit which outwits the artifices of a heart grown old in wickedness. This thought seemed to occur to the great lady, for her expression suddenly changed, and laying her cold hand on Ethel's arm, she said in a tone which was almost sincere : "Tell me, have you heard that your father's life is again threatened by a fresh judicial inquiry ? That he is suspected of having stirred up a revolt among the miners of the North ?"

The words "revolt" and "inquiry" conveyed no clear idea to Ethel's mind. She raised her great dark eyes to the stranger's face as she asked : "What do you mean ?"

"That your father is conspiring against the State ; that his crime is all but discovered ; that this crime will be punished with death."

"Death ! crime !" cried the poor girl.

"Crime and death," said the strange lady, seriously.

"My father ! my noble father !" continued Ethel. "Alas ! he spends his days in hearing me read the Edda and the Gospel ! He conspire ! What has he done to you ?"

"Do not look at me so fiercely. I tell you again I am not your enemy. Your father is suspected of a grave crime ; I am here to warn you of it. Perhaps, instead of such a show of dislike, I might lay claim to your gratitude."

This reproach touched Ethel.

"Oh, forgive me, noble lady, forgive me! What human being have I ever seen who was not an enemy? I have doubted you. You will forgive me, will you not?"

The stranger smiled.

"What, my girl! have you never met a friend until to-day?"

A hot blush mantled Ethel's brow. She hesitated an instant.

"Yes. God knows the truth, we have found a friend, noble lady,—one only!"

"One only!" said the great lady, hastily. "His name, I implore. You do not know how important it is; it is for your father's safety. Who is this friend?"

"I do not know," said Ethel.

The stranger turned pale.

"Is it because I wish to serve you that you trifle with me? Consider that your father's life is at stake. Tell me, who is this friend of whom you speak?"

"Heaven knows, noble lady, that I know nothing of him but his name, which is Ordener."

Ethel uttered these words with that difficulty which we all feel in pronouncing before an indifferent person the sacred name which wakes within us every emotion of love.

"Ordener! Ordener!" repeated the stranger, with singular agitation, while her hands crumpled the white embroideries of her veil. "And what is his father's name?" she asked in a troubled voice.

"I do not know," replied the girl. "What are his family and his father to me? This Ordener, noble lady, is the most generous of men."

Alas ! the accent with which these words were spoken revealed Ethel's secret to the sharp-sighted stranger.

She assumed an air of calm composure, and asked, without taking her eyes from the girl's face : " Have you heard of the approaching marriage of the viceroy's son to the daughter of the present lord chancellor, d'Ahlefeld ? "

She was obliged to repeat her question before Ethel's mind could grasp an idea which did not interest her.

" I believe I have," was her answer.

Her calmness, and her indifferent manner, seemed to surprise the stranger.

" Well, what do you think of this marriage ? "

It was impossible to note the slightest change in Ethel's large eyes as she replied : " Nothing, truly. May their union be a happy one ! "

" Counts Guldenlew and d'Ahlefeld, the fathers of the young couple, are both bitter enemies of your father. "

" May their marriage be blessed ! " gently repeated Ethel.

" I have an idea," continued the crafty stranger. " If your father's life be really threatened, you might obtain his pardon through the viceroy's son upon the occasion of this great marriage. "

" May the saints reward you for your kind thought for us, noble lady ; but how should my petition reach the viceroy's son ? "

These words were spoken in such good faith that they drew a gesture of surprise from the stranger.

" What ! do you not know him ? "

" That powerful lord ! " cried Ethel. " You forget that I have never been outside the walls of this fortress. "

"Truly," muttered the tall woman between her teeth. "What did that old fool of a Levin tell me? She does not know him. Still, that is impossible," said she; then, raising her voice: "You must have seen the viceroy's son; he has been here."

"That may be, noble lady; of all the men who have been here, I have never seen but one,— my Ordener."

"Your Ordener!" interrupted the stranger. She added, without seeming to notice Ethel's blushes: "Do you know a young man with noble face, elegant figure, grave and dignified bearing? His expression is gentle, yet firm; his complexion fresh as that of a maiden; his hair chestnut."

"Oh!" cried poor Ethel, "that is he; it is my betrothed, my adored Ordener! Where did you meet him? He told you that he loved me, did he not? He told you that he has my whole heart. Alas! a poor prisoner has nothing but her love to give. My noble friend! It was but a week ago, — I can see him still on this very spot, with his green mantle, beneath which beats so generous a heart, and that black plume, which waved so gracefully above his broad brow."

She did not finish her sentence. The tall stranger tottered, turned pale, then red, and cried in her ears in tones of thunder: "Wretched girl, you love Ordener Guldenlew, the betrothed of Ulrica d'Ahlefeld, the son of your father's deadly foe, the viceroy of Norway!"

Ethel fell fainting on the ground.



XXXVII.

Caupolican. Walk so cautiously that the earth itself may not catch your footfall. Redouble your precautions, friends. If we arrive unheard, I will answer for the victory.

Tucapel. Night veils all; fearful darkness covers the earth. We hear no sentinel; we have seen no spies.

Ringo. Let us advance!

Tucapel. What do I hear? Are we discovered?

LOPE DA VEGA : *The Conquest of Arauco.*

“ I SAY, Guldson Stayper, old fellow, the evening breeze is beginning to blow my hairy cap about my head rather vigorously.”

These words were spoken by Kennybol, as his eyes wandered for a moment from the giant who marched at the head of the insurgents, and half turned toward a mountaineer whom the accident of a disorderly progress had placed beside him.

His friend shook his head and shifted his banner from one shoulder to the other, with a deep sigh of fatigue, as he answered : —

“Hum! I fancy, Captain, that in these confounded Black Pillar gorges, through which the wind rushes like a torrent let loose, we shall not be as warm to-night as if we were flames dancing on the hearth.”

“We must make such rousing fires that the old owls will be scared from their nests among the rocks in their ruined palace. I can’t endure owls. On that horrid night when I saw the fairy Ubfem she took the shape of an owl.”

“By Saint Sylvester!” interrupted Guldon Stayper, turning his head, “the angel of the storm beats his wings most furiously! Take my advice, Captain Kennybol, and set fire to all the pine-trees on the mountain. It would be a fine sight to see an army warm itself with a whole forest.”

“Heaven forbid, my dear Guldon! Think of the deer, and the gerfalcons, and the pheasants! Roast the game, if you will, but do not burn it alive.”

Old Guldon laughed: “Oh, Captain, you are the same devil of a Kennybol, — the wolf of deer, the bear of wolves, and the buffalo of bears!”

“Are we far from Black Pillar?” asked a voice from the huntsmen.

“Comrade,” replied Kennybol, “we shall enter the gorge at nightfall; we shall reach the Four Crosses directly.”

There was a brief silence, during which nothing was

heard but the tramp of many feet, the moaning of the wind, and the distant song of the regiment of iron-workers from Lake Miösen.

"Friend Guldon Stayper," resumed Kennybol, when he had whistled an old hunting-song, "you have just passed a few days at Throndhjem, have you not?"

"Yes, Captain; my brother George, the fisherman, was ill, and I took his place in the boat for a short time, so that his poor family might not starve while he was ill."

"Well, as you come from Throndhjem, did you happen to see this count, the prisoner — Schumacker — Gleffenhem — what is his name, now? I mean that man in whose behalf we have rebelled against the royal protectorate, and whose arms I suppose you have on that big red flag."

"It is heavy enough, I can tell you!" said Guldon. "Do you mean the prisoner in Munkholm fortress, — the count, if you choose to call him so; and how do you suppose, Captain, that I should see him? I should have needed," he added, lowering his voice, "the eyes of that demon marching in front of us, though he does not leave a smell of brimstone behind him; of that Hans of Iceland, who can see through stone walls; or the ring of Queen Mab, who passes through keyholes. There is but one man among us now, I am sure, who ever saw the count, — the prisoner to whom you refer."

"But one? Ah! Mr. Hacket? But this Hacket is no longer with us; he left us to-day to return to —"

"I do not mean Mr. Hacket, Captain."

"And who then?"

"That young man in the green mantle, with the black plume, who burst into our midst last night."

"Well?"

"Well!" said Guldon, drawing closer to Kennybol; "he knows the count, — this famous count, as well as I know you, Captain Kennybol."

Kennybol looked at Guldon, winked his left eye, smacked his lips, and clapped his friend on the shoulder with that triumphant exclamation which so often escapes us when we are satisfied with our own penetration, — "I thought as much!"

"Yes, Captain," continued Guldon Stayper, changing his flame-colored banner to the other shoulder; "I assure you that the young man in green has seen Count — I don't know what you call him, the one for whom we are fighting — in Munkholm keep; and he seemed to think no more of walking into that prison than you or I would of shooting in a royal park."

"And how happen you to know this, brother Guldon?"

The old mountaineer seized Kennybol by the arm, and half opening his otter-skin waistcoat with a caution which was almost suspicious, he said, "Look there!"

"By my most holy patron saint!" exclaimed Kennybol; "it glitters like diamonds!"

It was indeed a superb diamond buckle, which fastened Guldon Stayper's rough belt.

"And they are real diamonds," he replied, closing his waistcoat. "I am just as sure of it as I am that the moon is two days' journey from the earth, and that my belt is made of buffalo leather."

Kennybol's face clouded, and his expression changed from surprise to distress. He cast down his eyes, and said with savage sternness: "Guldon Stayper, of Chol-Sœ village, in the Kiölen mountains, your father, Medprath Stayper, died at the age of one hundred and two, without reproach; for it was no crime to kill one of the king's deer or elk by mistake. Guldon Stayper, fifty-seven good years have passed over your gray head, which cannot be called youth except for an owl. Guldon Stayper, old friend, I would rather for your sake that the diamonds in that buckle were grains of millet, if you did not come by them honestly,—as honestly as a royal pheasant comes by a leaden bullet."

As he pronounced this strange sermon, the mountaineer's tone was both impressive and menacing.

"As truly as Captain Kennybol is the boldest hunter in Kiölen," replied Guldon, unmoved, "and as truly as these diamonds are diamonds, they are my lawful property."

"Indeed!" said Kennybol, in accents which wavered between confidence and doubt.

"God and my patron saint know," replied Guldon, "that one evening, just as I was pointing out the Thronð-hjem Spladgest to some sons of our good mother Norway, who were carrying thither the body of an officer found dead on Urchtal Sands,—this was about a week ago,—a young man stepped up to my boat. 'To Munkholm!' says he to me. I was not at all anxious to obey, Captain; a free bird never likes to fly into the neighborhood of a cage. But the young gentleman had a haughty, lordly

manner; he was followed by a servant leading two horses; he leaped into my boat with an air of authority; I took up my oars, that is to say, my brother's oars. It was my good angel that willed me to do so. When we reached the fortress, my young passenger, after exchanging a few words with the officer on guard, flung me in payment — as God hears me, he did, Captain — this diamond buckle which I showed you, and which would have belonged to my brother George, and not to me, if at the time that the traveller — Heaven help him! — engaged me, the day's work which I was doing for George had not been done. This is the truth, Captain Kennybol."

"Very good."

Little by little the captain's features had cleared as much as their naturally hard and gloomy expression would permit, and he asked Guldon in a softened voice: "And are you sure, old fellow, that this young man is the same who is now behind us with Norbith's followers?"

"Sure! I could not mistake among a thousand faces the face of him who made my fortune; besides, it is the same cloak, the same black plume."

"I believe you, Guldon!"

"And it is clear that he went there to see the famous prisoner; for if he were not bound on some very mysterious errand, he would never have rewarded so handsomely the boatman who rowed him over and besides, now that he has joined us —"

"You are right."

"And I imagine, Captain, that this young stranger may have far greater influence with the count whom we are

about to set free than Mr. Hacket, who strikes me, by my soul! as only fit to mew like a wildcat."

Kennybol nodded his head expressively.

"Comrade, you have said just what I meant to say. I should be much more inclined in this whole matter to obey that young gentleman than the envoy Hacket. Saint Sylvester and Saint Olaf help me! but if the Iceland demon be our commander, I believe, friend Guldon, that we owe it far less to that magpie Hacket than to this stranger."

"Really, Captain?" inquired Guldon.

Kennybol opened his mouth to answer, when he felt a hand on his shoulder; it was Norbith.

"Kennybol, we are betrayed! Gormon Woëstroem has just come from the South. The entire regiment of musketeers is marching against us. The Schleswig lancers are at Sparbo; three companies of Danish dragoons await the cavalry at Loevig. All along the road he saw as many green jackets as there were bushes. Let us hasten toward Skongen; let us not pause until we reach that point. There, at least, we can defend ourselves. One thing more; Gormon thinks that he saw the gleam of muskets among the briers as he came through the defiles of Black Pillar."

The young leader was pale and agitated; but his face and voice still showed courage and resolution.

"Impossible!" cried Kennybol.

"It is certain! certain!" said Norbith.

"But Mr. Hacket —"

"Is a traitor or a coward. Depend on what I say, friend Kennybol. Where is this Hacket?"

At this moment old Jonas approached the two chiefs. By the deep discouragement stamped upon his features it was easily seen that he had learned the fatal news.

The eyes of the two elder men, Jonas and Kennybol, met, and they shook their heads with one accord.

"Well, Jonas! Well, Kennybol!" said Norbith.

But the aged leader of the Färöe miners slowly passed his hand across his wrinkled brow, and in a low voice answered the appealing look of the aged leader of the Kiölen mountaineers: "Yes, it is but too true; it is but too certain. Gormon Woëström saw them."

"If it be so," said Kennybol, "what is to be done?"

"What is to be done?" answered Jonas.

"I consider, friend Jonas, that we should do well to halt."

"And better still, brother Kennybol, to retreat."

"Halt! retreat!" exclaimed Norbith; "we must push forward."

The two elders looked at the young man in cold surprise.

"Push forward!" said Kennybol; "and how about the Munkholm musketeers?"

"And the Schleswig lancers?" added Jonas.

"And the Danish dragoons?" continued Kennybol.

Norbith stamped his foot.

"And the royal protectorate; and my mother dying of cold and hunger?"

"The devil, the royal protectorate!" said the miner Jonas, with a shudder.

"Never mind!" said Kennybol.

Jonas took Kennybol by the hand, saying: "Old fellow, you have not the honor to be a ward of our glorious sovereign, Christian IV. May the blessed king Olaf, in heaven, deliver us from the protectorate!"

"You had better trust to your sword for that benefit!" said Norbith, in a fierce tone.

"Bold words are easy to a young man, friend Norbith," answered Kennybol; "but consider that if we advance, all these green jackets —"

"I think that it would be useless for us to return to our mountains, like foxes running from wolves, for our names and our revolt are known; and if we needs must die, I prefer a musket-ball to the hangman's rope."

Jonas nodded assent.

"The devil! the protectorate for our brothers, the gallows for us! Norbith may be right, after all."

"Give me your hand, good Norbith," said Kennybol; "there is danger in either course. We may as well march straight to the edge of the precipice as fall over it backwards."

"Come on! come on!" cried old Jonas, striking his sword-hilt.

Norbith grasped them by the hand.

"Listen, brothers! Be bold, like me; I will be prudent, like you. Let us not pause until we reach Skongen; the garrison is weak, and we will overwhelm it. Let us pass, since we must, through the defiles of Black Pillar, but in utter silence. We must traverse them, even if they be guarded by the enemy."

"I do not think that the musketeers have come so far

as Ordals bridge, beyond Skongen; but it matters not. Silence!"

"Silence! so be it!" repeated Kennybol.

"Now, Jonas," said Norbith, "let us return to our posts. To-morrow we may be at Throndhjem in spite of musketeers, lancers, dragoons, and all the green jerkins of the South."

The three chiefs parted. Soon the watchword, "Silence!" passed from rank to rank, and the insurgents, a moment before so tumultuous, looked, in those waste places darkened by approaching night, like a band of mute ghosts roaming noiselessly through the winding paths of a cemetery.

But their road became narrower every moment, and seemed by degrees to dive between two walls of rock which grew steeper and steeper. As the red moon rose among a mass of cold clouds hovering about her with weird inconstancy, Kennybol turned to Guldon Stayper, saying, "We are about to enter Black Pillar Pass. Silence!"

In fact, they already heard the roar of the torrent which follows every turn of the road between the two mountains, and they saw, to the south, the huge granite pyramid known as the Black Pillar, outlined against the gray sky and the surrounding snow-capped mountains; while the western horizon, veiled in mists, was bounded by the extreme verge of Sparbo forest, and by huge piles of rocks, terraced as if a stairway for giants.

The rebels, forced to stretch their columns over this crooked road compressed between two mountains, con-

tinued their march. They penetrated those dark valleys without lighting a torch, without uttering a sound. The very sound of their footsteps was unheard amid the deafening crash of waterfalls and the roar of a furious blast which bowed the Druidical woods, and drove the clouds in eddying whirls about tall peaks clad in snow and ice. Lost in the dark depths of the gorge, the light of the moon, which was veiled now and again, did not reach the heads of their pikes, and the white eagles flying overhead did not guess that so vast a multitude of men was troubling their solitude.

Once old Guldon Stayper touched Kennybol's shoulder with the butt-end of his carbine, saying, "Captain, Captain, something glimmers behind that tuft of holly and broom."

"So it does," replied the mountain chief; "it is the water of the stream reflecting the clouds." And they passed on.

Again Guldon grasped his leader, quickly by the arm.

"Look!" he said; "are not those muskets, shining yonder in the shadow of that rock?"

Kennybol shook his head; then, after looking attentively, he said, "Never fear, brother Guldon; it is a moon-beam falling on an icy peak."

No further cause for alarm appeared, and the various bands, as they marched quietly through the winding gorge, insensibly forgot all the danger of their position.

After two hours of often painful progress, over the tree-trunks and granite boulders which blocked the road, the vanguard entered the mountainous group of pine-trees at

the end of Black Pillar Pass, overhung by high, black, moss-grown cliffs.

Guldon Stayper approached Kennybol, declaring that he was delighted that they were at last almost out of this cursed cut-throat place, and that they must render thanks to Saint Sylvester that the Black Pillar had not been fatal to them.

Kennybol laughed, swearing that he had never shared such old-womanish fears; for with most men, when danger is over it ceases to exist, and they try to prove by their incredulity the courage which they perhaps failed to display before.

At this moment two small round lights, like two live coals, moving in the thick underwood, attracted his attention.

"By my soul's salvation!" he whispered, pulling Guldon's arm, "see; those two blazing eyes must surely belong to the fiercest wildcat that ever mewed in a thicket."

"You are right," replied old Stayper; "and if he were not marching in front of us, I should rather think that they were the wicked eyes of the demon of Ice—"

"Hush!" cried Kennybol. Then, seizing his carbine, he added, "Truly, it shall not be said that such fine game passed before Kennybol in vain."

The shot was fired before Guldon Stayper, who threw himself upon the rash hunter, could prevent it. It was not the shrill cry of a wildcat that answered the discharge of the gun; it was the fearful howl of a tiger, followed by a burst of human laughter more frightful still.

No one heard the report as its dying echoes were prolonged from rock to rock ; for the flash of the powder had no sooner lighted up the darkness, the fatal crack of the gun had no sooner burst upon the silence, than a thousand terrible voices rang out unexpectedly from mountain, valley, and forest ; a shout of " Long live the king ! " loud as the rolling thunder, swept over the heads of the rebels, close beside them, behind and before them, and the murderous light of a dreadful volley of musketry, bursting from every hand, and striking them down, at the same time disclosed, amid red clouds of smoke, a battalion behind every rock, and a soldier behind every tree.



XXXVIII.

To arms ! to arms ! ye captains !

The Prisoner of Ochali.

WE must now ask the reader to retrace with us the day which has just passed, and to return to Skongen, where, while the insurgents were leaving Apsyl-Corh lead-mine, the regiment of musketeers, which we saw on the march in an earlier chapter of this very truthful tale, had just arrived.

After giving a few orders in regard to billeting the soldiers under his command, Baron Væthain, colonel of the musketeers, was about to enter the house assigned to him, near the city gate, when a heavy hand was placed familiarly upon his shoulder. He turned and saw a short man, whose face was almost wholly hidden by a broad-brimmed straw hat. He had a bushy red beard, and was closely

wrapped in the folds of a gray serge cloak, which, by the tattered cowl still hanging from it, seemed once to have been a hermit's gown. His hands were covered with thick gloves.

"Well, my good man," asked the colonel, sharply, "what the deuce do you want?"

"Colonel of the Munkholm musketeers," replied the fellow, with an odd look, "follow me for a moment; I have news for you."

At this singular request, the baron paused for a moment in silent surprise.

"Important news, Colonel!" repeated the man with the thick gloves.

This persistence decided Baron Væthaün. At such a crisis, and with such a mission as his, no information was to be despised. "So be it," said he.

The little man preceded him, and as soon as they were outside the town, he stopped. "Colonel, would you really like to destroy all the insurgents at a single blow?"

The colonel laughed, saying, "Why, that would not be a bad way to open the campaign."

"Very well! Then station your men in ambush this very day, in Black Pillar Pass, two miles distant from the town; the rebels are to encamp there to-night. When you see their first fire blaze, fall upon them with your troops. Victory will be easy."

"Excellent advice, my good man, and I thank you for it; but how did you learn all this?"

"If you knew me, Colonel, you would rather ask me how I could fail to know it."

"Who are you, then?"

The man stamped his foot. "I did not come here to answer such questions."

"Fear nothing. Whoever you may be, the service which you have done us must be your safeguard. Perhaps you were one of the rebels?"

"I refused to join them."

"Then why conceal your name, if you are a loyal subject of the king?"

"What is that to you?"

The colonel made another attempt to gain a little information as to this singular giver of advice. "Tell me, is it true that the insurgents are under command of the famous Hans of Iceland?"

"Hans of Iceland!" repeated the little man, with peculiar emphasis.

The baron repeated his question. A burst of laughter, which might have passed for the roar of a wild beast, was the only answer which he could obtain. He ventured a few more questions as to the number and the leaders of the miners; the little man silenced him.

"Colonel of the Munkholm musketeers, I have told you all that I have to tell. Lie in wait to-day in Black Pillar Pass with your entire regiment, and you may destroy the whole rebel force."

"You will not tell me who you are; you thus prevent the king from proving his gratitude; but it is only right that I should reward you for the service which you have done me."

The colonel threw his purse at the small man's feet.

"Keep your gold, Colonel," said he; "I do not need it. And," he added, pointing to a large bag which hung from his rope girdle, "if you wish pay for killing these men, I have money enough, Colonel, to give you for their blood."

Before the colonel could recover from the surprise caused by this mysterious being's inexplicable words, he had vanished.

Baron Væthain slowly retraced his steps, wondering whether he should place any faith in the fellow's news. As he entered his quarters, he was handed a letter, sealed with the lord chancellor's arms. It contained a message from Count d'Ahlefeld, which the colonel found, with amazement that may be readily imagined, consisted of the same piece of news and the same advice just given him outside the city gate by the incomprehensible character with the straw hat and the thick gloves.



XXXIX.

All must perish !
The sword cleaveth the helmet ;
The strong armor is pierced by the lance ;
Fire devoureth the dwelling of princes ;
Engines break down the fences of the battle.
All must perish !
The race of Hengist is gone —
The name of Horsa is no more !
Shrink not then from your doom, sons of the sword !
Let your blades drink blood like wine ;
Feast ye in the banquet of slaughter,
By the light of the blazing halls !
Strong be your swords while your blood is warm,
And spare neither for pity nor fear,
For vengeance hath but an hour ;
Strong hate itself shall expire !
I also must perish !

WALTER SCOTT : *Ivanhoe*.

WE will not try to describe the fearful confusion which broke the already straggling ranks of the rebels, when the fatal defile suddenly revealed to them all

its steep and bristling peaks, all its caverns peopled with unlooked-for foes. It would be hard to say whether the prolonged shout, made up of a thousand shrieks, which rose from the columns of men thus unexpectedly mowed down, was a yell of despair, of terror, or of rage. The dreadful fire vomited against them from every side by the now unmasked platoons of the royal troops, grew hotter every moment; and before another shot from their lines followed Kennybol's unfortunate volley, they were wrapped in a stifling cloud of burning smoke, through which death flew blindly, where each man, shut off from his friends, could but dimly distinguish the musketeers, lancers, and dragoons, moving vaguely among the cliffs and upon the edge of the thickets, like demons in a red-hot furnace.

The insurgents, thus scattered over a distance of a mile, upon a narrow, winding road, bordered on one side by a deep torrent, on the other by a rocky wall, which made it impossible for them to turn and fall back, were like a serpent destroyed by a blow on the back, when he has unwound all his spirals, and, though cut to pieces, still tries to turn and coil, striving to unite his separate fragments.

When their first surprise was past, a common despair seemed to animate all these men, naturally fierce and intrepid. Frantic with rage to be thus overwhelmed without the possibility of defence, the rebels uttered a simultaneous shout,—a shout which in an instant drowned the clamor of their triumphant foes; and when the latter saw these men, without leaders, in dire disorder, almost destitute of weapons, climbing perpendicular cliffs, under

a terrible fire, clinging with tooth and nail to the bushes growing on the verge of the precipice, brandishing hammers and pitchforks, the well-armed troops, well-drilled, securely posted as they were, although they had not yet lost a single man, could not resist a moment of involuntary panic.

Several times these barbarians clambered over a bridge of dead bodies, or upon the shoulders of their comrades planted against the rock like a living ladder, to the heights held by their assailants; but they had scarcely cried, "Liberty!" had scarcely lifted their hatchets or their knotted clubs,—they had scarcely showed their blackened faces, foaming with convulsive rage, ere they were hurled into the abyss, dragging with them such of their rash companions as they encountered in their fall, hanging to some bush or hugging some cliff.

The efforts of these unfortunates to fly and to defend themselves were fruitless. Every outlet was guarded; every accessible point swarmed with soldiers. The greater part of the luckless rebels bit the dust, perishing when they had shattered scythe or cutlass upon some granite fragment; some, folding their arms, their eyes fixed upon the ground, sat by the roadside, silently waiting for a ball to hurl them into the torrent below; those whom Hacket's forethought had provided with wretched muskets, fired a few chance shots at the summit of the cliffs and the mouth of the caves, from which a ceaseless rain of shot fell upon their heads. A tremendous uproar, in which the furious shouts of the rebel leaders and the quiet commands of the king's officers were plainly

distinguishable, was mingled with the intermittent and frequent din of musketry, while a bloody vapor rose and floated above the scene of carnage, veiling the face of the mountains in tremulous mists; and the stream, white with foam, flowed like an enemy between the two bodies of hostile men, bearing away upon its bosom its prey of corpses.

In the earlier stage of the action, or rather of the slaughter, the Kiölen mountaineers, under the brave and reckless Kennybol, were the greatest sufferers. It will be remembered that they formed the advance-guard of the rebel army, and that they had entered the pine wood at the head of the pass. The ill-fated Kennybol had no sooner fired his gun, than the forest, peopled as by magic with hostile sharpshooters, surrounded them with a ring of fire; while from a level height, commanded by a number of huge bowlders, an entire battalion of the Munkholm regiment, formed in a hollow square, battered them unceasingly with a fearful musketry. In this horrible emergency, Kennybol, distracted and aghast, gazed at the mysterious giant, his only hope of safety lying in some superhuman power such as that of Hans of Iceland; but, alas! the awful demon did not suddenly unfold broad wings and soar above the combatants, spitting forth fire and brimstone upon the musketeers; he did not grow and grow until he reached the clouds, and overthrow a mountain upon the foe, or stamp upon the earth and open a yawning gulf to swallow up the ambushed army. The dreadful Hans of Iceland shrank like Kennybol from the first volley of shot, and approaching him, with troubled

countenance asked for a carbine, because, he said, in a very commonplace tone, at such a time his axe was quite as useless as any old woman's spindle.

Kennybol, amazed, but still credulous, offered his own musket to the giant with a terror which almost made him forget his fear of the balls showering about him. Still expecting a miracle, he looked to see his fatal weapon become as big as a cannon in the hands of Hans of Iceland, or to see it change into a winged dragon darting fire from eyes, mouth, and nostrils. Nothing of the sort occurred, and the poor hunter's astonishment reached its climax when he saw the demon load the gun with ordinary powder and shot, just as he himself might have done, take aim like himself, and fire, though with far less skill than he would have shown. He stared at him in stupid surprise, as this purely mechanical act was repeated again and again; and convinced at last that all hope of a miracle must be abandoned, he turned his thoughts to rescuing his companions and himself from their evil predicament by some human means. Already his poor old friend Guldon Stayper lay beside him, riddled with bullets; already his followers, terrified and unable to escape, surrounded on every hand, huddled together without a thought of defence, uttering distressing cries. Kennybol saw what an easy target this mass of men afforded the enemy's guns, each discharge destroying a score of the insurgents. He ordered his unfortunate companions to scatter, to take refuge in the bushes along the road, — much thicker and larger at this point than anywhere else in Black Pillar Pass, — to hide in the underbrush, and to

reply as best they could to the more and more murderous fire from the sharpshooters and the Munkholm battalion. The mountaineers, for the most part well armed, being all hunters, carried out their leader's order with a readiness which they might not have displayed at a less critical moment ; for in the face of danger men usually lose their head, and obey willingly any one who has presence of mind and self-possession to act for all.

Still, this wise measure was far from insuring victory, or even safety. More mountaineers lay stretched upon the ground than still lived, and in spite of the example and encouragement offered them by their leader and the giant, several of them, leaning on their useless guns or prostrate with the wounded, obstinately persisted in waiting to be killed without taking the trouble to kill others in return. It may seem amazing that these men, in the habit of exposing their life every day in their expeditions over the glaciers in pursuit of wild beasts, should lose heart so soon ; but let no one forget that in vulgar hearts courage is purely local. A man may laugh at shot and shell, and shiver in the dark or on the edge of a precipice ; a man may face fierce animals daily, leap across fearful abysses, and yet run from a volley of artillery. Fearlessness is often only a habit ; and one who has ceased to fear death under certain forms, dreads it none the less.

Kennybol, surrounded by heaps of dying friends, began himself to despair, although as yet he had received only a slight scratch on his left arm, and the diabolical giant still kept up his fire with the most comforting composure. All at once he saw an extraordinary confusion in

the fatal battalion posted on the heights, which could not be caused by the slight damage inflicted by the very feeble resistance of his followers. He heard fearful shrieks of agony, the curses of the dying, exclamations of terror, rise from the victors.

Soon their fire slackened, the smoke cleared away, and he distinctly saw huge masses of granite falling upon the Munkholm musketeers from the top of the high cliff overlooking the level height upon which they were stationed. These bowlders succeeded one another with awful rapidity ; they crashed one upon the other, and rebounded among the soldiers, who breaking their lines rushed in dire disorder down the hill, and fled in every direction.

At this unexpected aid, Kennybol turned ; but the giant was still there ! The mountaineer was dumfounded ; for he supposed that Hans of Iceland had at last found his wings and taken his place upon the cliff, from which he overwhelmed the enemy. He looked up to the spot whence those fearful masses fell, and saw nothing. He could therefore only suppose that a party of rebels had succeeded in reaching this dangerous position, although he saw no glitter of weapons, and heard no shouts of triumph.

However, the fire from the plateau had wholly ceased ; the trees hid the remnant of the royal troops, who were probably rallying their forces at the foot of the hill. The musketry from the sharpshooters also became less frequent. Kennybol, like a skilful leader, took advantage of this unexpected interval ; he encouraged his men, and showed them, by the sombre light which reddened the scene of

slaughter, the pile of corpses heaped upon the height, and the bowlders which still fell at intervals.

Then the mountaineers in their turn answered the enemy's groans with shouts of victory. They formed in line, and although still harassed by sharpshooters scattered among the bushes, they resolved, filled with fresh courage, to force their way out of this ill-omened defile.

The column thus formed was about to move; Kennybol had already given the signal with his horn, amid loud cries of "Liberty! liberty! No more protectorate!" when the notes of trumpet and drum sounding a charge were heard directly in front of them. Then the rest of the battalion from the height, strengthened by reinforcements of fresh troops, appeared within gunshot at a turn in the road, displaying a bristling line of pikes and bayonets upheld by rank upon rank as far as the eye could reach. Arriving thus unexpectedly in sight of Kennybol's division, the troops halted, and a man, who seemed to be the commanding officer, stepped forward, waving a white flag and escorted by a trumpeter.

The unforeseen appearance of this troop did not dismay Kennybol. In time of danger there is a point where surprise and fear become impossible.

At the first sound of trumpet and drum the old fox of Kiölen halted his men. As the royal troops drew up before him in line of battle, he ordered every gun to be loaded, and formed his mountaineers in double ranks, so that they might not offer so broad a mark for the enemy's fire. He placed himself at the head, the giant at his side.

as in the heat of action, for he began to feel quite familiar with him, and observed that his eyes did not flame quite so brightly as a smithy's forge, and that his pretended claws were by no means as unlike ordinary human fingernails as was claimed for them.

When the officer in command of the musketeers stepped forward as if to surrender, and the sharpshooters ceased firing, although their loud shouts, ringing out on every hand, declared them still ambushed in the forests, he suspended his preparations for defence.

Meantime, the officer with the white flag had reached the centre of the space between the two hostile columns; here he paused, and the trumpeter accompanying him blew three loud blasts. The officer then cried in a loud voice, distinctly heard by the mountaineers, in spite of the ever increasing tumult of the battle raging behind them in the mountain gorges: "In the king's name! The king graciously pardons all those rebels who throw down their arms and surrender their leaders to his Majesty's supreme justice!"

The bearer of the flag of truce had scarcely pronounced those words, when a shot was fired from a neighboring thicket. The officer staggered, took a few steps forward, raising his flag above his head, and fell, exclaiming: "Treason!"

No one knew whose hand had fired the fatal shot.

"Treason! Cowardly treason!" repeated the royal troops, with a thrill of indignation.

And a fearful volley of musketry overwhelmed the mountaineers.

"Treason!" replied the mountaineers in their turn, made furious as they saw their brothers fall.

And a general discharge answered the unexpected attack from the royal troops.

"At them, comrades! Death to those vile cowards! Death!" cried the officers of the musketeers.

And both parties rushed forward with drawn swords, the two contending columns meeting directly over the body of the unfortunate officer, with a fearful din of arms.

The broken ranks were soon inextricably confounded. Rebel chiefs, king's officers, soldiers, mountaineers, all pell-mell ran their heads together, seized one another, grappled like two bands of famished tigers meeting in the desert. Their long pikes, bayonets, and partisans were now useless; swords and hatchets alone gleamed above their heads, and many of the combatants, in their hand-to-hand struggle, could use no other weapon than their dagger or their teeth.

The same rage and fury inspired both mountaineers and musketeers; the common cry of "Treason! Vengeance!" sprang from every mouth. The fray had reached a point when every heart was full of brutal ferocity, when men walked with utter indifference over heaps of wounded and dead, amid which the dying revive only to make one last attack on him who tramples them under foot.

At this moment a short man, whom several combatants, amid the smoke and streaming blood, took for a wild beast, in his dress of skins, flung himself into the thick of the carnage, with awful laughter and yells of joy.

None knew whence he came, nor upon which side he fought; for his stone axe did not choose its victims, but smote alike the skull of a rebel and the head of a musketeer. He seemed, however, to prefer slaying the Munkholm troops. All gave way before him; he rushed through the fray like a disembodied spirit; and his bloody axe whirled about him without a pause, scattering fragments of flesh, lacerated limbs, and shattered bones on every side.

He shrieked "Vengeance!" as did all the rest, and uttered strange words, the name of "Gill" recurring frequently. This fearful stranger seemed to regard the slaughter as a feast.

A mountaineer upon whom his murderous glance fell threw himself at the feet of the giant in whom Kennybol had placed such vain trust, crying: "Hans of Iceland, save me!"

"Hans of Iceland!" repeated the little man.

He approached the giant.

"Are you Hans of Iceland?" he asked.

The giant, by way of answer, raised his axe. The small man sprang back, and the blade, as it fell, was buried in the skull of the wretch who had implored his aid.

The unknown laughed aloud.

"Ho! ho! by Ingulf! I thought Hans of Iceland was more skilful."

"It is thus that Hans of Iceland saves those who pray to him for help!" said the giant.

"You are right."

The two dreadful champions attacked each other madly.

Stone axe and steel axe met; they clashed so fiercely that both blades flew in fragments, with a myriad sparks.

Quicker than thought, the little man, finding himself disarmed, seized a heavy wooden club, dropped by some dying man, and evading the giant, who stooped to grasp him in his arms, dealt a furious blow with both hands on the broad brow of his colossal antagonist.

The giant uttered a stifled shriek, and fell. The little man trampled him under foot in triumph, foaming with joy, and exclaiming, "You bore a name too heavy for you!" and brandishing his victorious mace, he rushed in search of fresh victims.

The giant was not dead. The force of the blow had stunned him, and he dropped senseless, but soon opened his eyes, and gave faint signs of returning life. A musketeer, seeing him through the uproar, threw himself upon him, shouting, "Hans of Iceland is taken! Victory!"

"Hans of Iceland is taken!" repeated every voice, whether in tones of triumph or distress.

The little man had vanished.

For some time the mountaineers had realized that they must perforce submit to superior numbers; for the Munkholm musketeers had been joined by the sharpshooters from the forest, and by detachments of lancers and foot dragoons, who poured in from deep gorges, where the surrender of many of the rebel leaders had put a stop to slaughter. Brave Kennybol, wounded early in the fight, was made a prisoner. Hans of Iceland's capture deprived the mountaineers of such courage as they still possessed, and they threw down their arms.

When the first beams of the rising sun gilded the sharp peaks of lofty glaciers still half submerged in darkness, mournful peace and fearful silence reigned in Black Pillar Pass, broken only by feeble moans borne away by the chill breeze.

Black clouds of crows flocked to those fatal gorges from every quarter of the horizon; and a few poor goat-herds, who passed the cliffs at twilight, hastened home in terror, declaring that they had seen an animal with the face of a man in Black Pillar Pass, seated on a heap of slain, drinking their blood.

XL.

Let him who will, burn beneath these smouldering fires. — BRANTOME.

“OPEN the window, daughter; those panes are very dirty, and I would fain see the day.”

“See the day, father! It will soon be night.”

“The sun still lies on the hills along the fjord. I long to breathe the free air through my prison bars. The sky is so clear!”

“Father, a storm is at hand.”

“A storm, Ethel! Where do you see it?”

“It is because the sky is clear, father, that I foresee a storm.”

The old man looked at his daughter in surprise.

“Had I reasoned thus in my youth, I should not be here.” Then he added in a firmer tone: “What you say is correct, but it is not a common inference for one of your age. I do not understand why your youthful reasoning should be so like my aged experience.”

Ethel's eyes fell, as if she were troubled by this serious and simple remark. She clasped her hands sadly, and a deep sigh heaved her breast.

“Daughter,” said the aged prisoner, “for some days you have looked pale, as if life had never warmed the blood in

your veins. For several mornings you have approached me with red and swollen lids, with eyes that have wept and watched. I have passed several days in silence, Ethel, with no effort on your part to rouse me from my gloomy meditations on the past. You sit beside me more melancholy even than myself; and yet you are not, like your father, weighed down by the burden of a whole lifetime of empty inaction. Morning clouds vanish quickly. You are at that period of existence when you can choose in dreams a future independent of the present, be it what it may. What troubles you, my daughter? Thanks to your constant captivity, you are sheltered from all sudden calamity. What error have you committed? I cannot think that you are grieving for me; you must by this time be accustomed to my incurable misfortunes. Hope, to be sure, can no longer be the subject of my discourse; but that is no reason why I should read despair in your eyes."

As he spoke these words, the prisoner's stern voice melted with paternal love. Ethel stood silently before him. All at once she turned away with an almost convulsive motion, fell upon her knees on the stone floor, and hid her face in her hands, as if to stifle the tears and sobs which burst from her.

Too much woe filled full the wretched girl's heart. What had she done to that fatal stranger, that she should reveal to her the secret that was eating away her very life? Alas! since she had known her Ordener's true name, the poor child had not closed her eyes, nor had her soul known rest. Night brought her no alleviation, save that then she could weep freely and unseen. All was over! He was not hers,

he who was hers by all her memories, by all her pangs, by all her prayers, he whose wife she had held herself to be upon the faith of her dreams. For the evening when Ordener had clasped her so tenderly in his arms was no more than a dream to her now. And in truth that sweet dream had been repeated nightly in her sleep. Was it a guilty love which she still cherished for that absent friend, struggle against it as she might? Her Ordener was betrothed to another! And who can tell what that virginal heart endured when the strange and unknown sentiment of jealousy found entrance there like a poisonous viper? When she tossed for long sleepless hours upon her fevered bed, picturing her Ordener, perhaps even then, in the arms of another, fairer, richer, nobler than herself? For, thought she, I was mad indeed to suppose that he would brave death for me. Ordener is the son of a viceroy, of a great lord, and I am nothing but a poor prisoner, nothing but the daughter of a proscribed and exiled man. He has left me, for he is free; and left me, no doubt, to wed his lovely betrothed,—the daughter of a chancellor, a minister, a haughty count! Has my Ordener deceived me, then? Oh, God! who would have thought that such a voice was capable of deceit?

And the wretched Ethel wept and wept again, and saw her Ordener before her, the man whom she had made the unwitting divinity of her whole being, that Ordener adorned with all the splendor of his rank, advancing to the altar amid festal preparations, and gazing upon her rival with the smile that had once been her delight.

However, in spite of her unspeakable agony, she never

for an instant forgot her filial affection. The weak girl made the most heroic efforts to conceal her distress from her unfortunate father; for there is nothing more painful than to repress all outward signs of grief, and tears unshed are far more bitter than those that flow. Several days had passed before the silent old man observed the change in his Ethel, and at his affectionate questions her long-repressed grief had at last burst forth.

For some time he watched her emotion with a bitter smile and a shake of the head; but at last he said: "Ethel, you do not live among men; why do you weep?"

He had scarcely finished these words, when the sweet and noble girl rose. By a great effort she checked her tears, and dried her eyes with her scarf, saying: "Father, forgive me; it was a momentary weakness." And she looked at him with an attempt to smile.

She went to the back of the room, found the Edda, seated herself by her taciturn father, and opened the book at random; then, mastering her voice, she began to read. But her useless task was unheeded by her and by the old man, who waved his hand.

"Enough, enough, my daughter!"

She closed her book.

"Ethel," added Schumacker, "do you ever think of Ordener?"

The young girl started in confusion.

"Yes," he continued, "of that Ordener who went —"

"Father," interrupted Ethel, "why should we trouble ourselves about him? I think as you do, — that he left us, never to return."

"Never to return, my daughter! I cannot have said such a thing. On the contrary, I have a strange presentiment that he will come back."

"That was not your opinion, father, when you spoke so distrustingly of the young man."

"Did I speak distrustfully of him?"

"Yes, father, and I agree with you; I think that he deceived us."

"That he deceived us, daughter! If I judged him thus, I acted like most men who condemn without proof. I have received nothing but professions of devotion from this Ordener."

"And how do you know, father, that those cordial words did not hide treacherous thoughts?"

"Usually men disregard misfortune and disgrace. If this Ordener were not attached to me, he would not have visited my prison without a purpose."

"Are you sure," replied Ethel, feebly, "that he had no purpose in coming here?"

"What could it be?" eagerly asked the old man.

Ethel was silent.

It was too great an effort for her to continue to accuse her beloved Ordener, whom she had formerly defended against her father.

"I am no longer Count Griffenfeld," he resumed. "I am no longer lord chancellor of Denmark and Norway, the favored dispenser of royal bounty, the all-powerful minister. I am a miserable prisoner of State, a proscribed man, to be shunned like one stricken with the plague. It shows courage even to mention my name without

execration to the men whom I overwhelmed with honors and wealth, it shows devotion for a man to cross the threshold of this dungeon unless he be a jailer or an executioner; it shows heroism, my girl, for a man to cross it and call himself my friend. No; I will not be ungrateful, like the rest of humanity. That young man merits my gratitude, were it only for letting me see a kindly face and hear a consoling voice."

Ethel listened in agony to these words, which would have charmed her a few days earlier, when this Ordener was still cherished as her Ordener. The old man, after a brief pause, resumed in a solemn tone: "Listen to me, my daughter; for what I have to say to you is serious. I feel that I am fading slowly; my life is ebbing. Yes, daughter, my end is at hand."

Ethel interrupted him with a stifled groan.

"Oh God, father, say not so! For mercy's sake, spare your poor daughter! Alas! would you forsake me? What would become of me, alone in the world, if I were deprived of your protection?"

"The protection of a proscribed man!" said her father, shaking his head. "However, that is the very thing of which I have been thinking. Yes, your future happiness occupies me even more than my past misfortunes; hear me, therefore, and do not interrupt me again. This Ordener does not deserve that you should judge him so severely, my daughter, and I had not hitherto thought that you felt such dislike to him. His appearance is frank and noble, which proves nothing, truly; but I must say that he does not strike me as without merit,

although it is enough that he has a human soul, for it to contain the seeds of every vice and every crime. There is no flame without smoke."

The old man again paused, and fixing his eyes upon his daughter, added: "Warned from within of approaching death, I have pondered much, Ethel; and if he return, as I hope he may, I shall make him your protector and husband."

Ethel trembled and turned pale; at the very moment when her dream of happiness had fled forever, her father strove to realize it. The bitter reflection, "I might have been happy!" revived all the violence of her despair. For some moments she was unable to speak, lest the burning tears which filled her eyes should flow afresh.

Her father waited for her answer.

"What!" she said at last in a faint voice, "would you have chosen him for my husband, father, without knowing his birth, his family, his name?"

"I not only chose him, my daughter, I choose him still."

The old man's tone was almost imperious. Ethel sighed.

"I choose him for you, I say; and what is his birth to me? I do not care to know his family, since I know him. Think of it; he is the only anchor of salvation left to you. Fortunately, I believe that he does not feel the same aversion for you which you show for him."

The poor girl raised her eyes to heaven.

"You hear me, Ethel! I repeat, what is his birth to me? He is doubtless of obscure rank, for those born in palaces are not taught to frequent prisons. Do not show

such proud regret, my daughter; do not forget that Ethel Schumacker is no longer Princess of Wollin and Countess of Tönsberg. You have fallen lower than the point from which your father rose by his own efforts. Consider yourself happy if this man accept your hand, be his family what it may. If he be of humble birth, so much the better, my daughter; at least your days will be sheltered from the storms which have tormented your father. Far from the envy and hatred of men, under some unknown name, you will lead a modest existence, very different from mine, for its end will be better than its beginning."

Ethel fell on her knees.

"Oh, father, have mercy!"

He opened his arms to her in amazement.

"What do you mean, my daughter?"

"In Heaven's name, do not describe a happiness which is not for me!"

"Ethel," sternly answered the old man, "do not risk your whole life. I refused the hand of a princess of the blood royal, a princess of Holstein Augustenburg,—do you hear that?—and my pride was cruelly punished. You despise an obscure but loyal man; tremble lest yours be as sadly chastised."

"Would to Heaven," sighed Ethel, "that he were an obscure and loyal man!"

The old man rose, and paced the room in agitation. "My daughter," said he, "your poor father implores and commands you. Do not let me die uncertain as to your future; promise me that you will accept this stranger as your husband."

"I will obey you always, father; but do not hope that he will return."

"I have weighed the probabilities, and I think from the tone in which Ordener uttered your name —"

"That he loves me!" bitterly interrupted Ethel. "Oh, no; do not believe it."

The father answered coldly: "I do not know whether, to use your girlish expression, he loves you; but I know that he will return."

"Give up that idea, father; besides, you would not wish him for your son-in-law if you knew who he is."

"Ethel, he shall be my son-in-law, be his name and rank what they may."

"Well!" she replied, "how if this young man, whom you regard as your solace, whom you consider as your daughter's support, be the son of one of your mortal foes, — of the viceroy of Norway, Count Guldenlew?"

Schumacker started back.

"Heavens! what do you say? Ordener! that Ordener! It is impossible!"

The look of unutterable hatred which flashed from the old man's faded eyes froze Ethel's trembling heart, and she vainly repented the rash words which she had uttered.

The blow was struck. For a few moments Schumacker stood motionless, with folded arms; his whole body quivered as if laid upon live coals; his flaming eyes started from their sockets; and his gaze, riveted to the pavement, seemed as if it would pierce the stones. At last these words issued from his livid lips in a voice as faint as that

of a man who dreams. "Ordener! Yes, it must be so; Ordener Guldenlew! It is well. Come, Schumacker, old fool, open your arms to him; the loyal youth has come to stab you to the heart."

Suddenly he stamped upon the ground, and went on in tones of thunder: "So they send their whole infamous race to insult me in my disgrace and captivity! I have already seen a d'Ahlefeld; I almost smiled upon a Guldenlew! Monsters! Who would ever have thought that this Ordener possessed such a soul and bore such a name? Wretched me! Wretched he!"

Then he fell exhausted into his chair, and while his breast heaved with sighs, poor Ethel, trembling with fright, wept at his feet.

"Do not weep, my daughter," said he, in gloomy tones; "come, oh, come to my heart!"

And he clasped her in his arms.

Ethel knew not how to explain this caress at a moment of rage, but he resumed: "At least, girl, you were more clear-sighted than your old father. You were not deceived by that serpent with gentle but venomous eyes. Come! let me thank you for the hatred which you have shown me that you feel for that contemptible Ordener."

She shuddered at these praises, alas! so ill-deserved.

"Father," said she, "be calm!"

"Promise me," added Schumacker, "that you will always retain the same feeling for the son of Guldenlew. Swear it!"

"God forbids us to swear, father."

"Swear, swear, girl!" vehemently repeated Schumacker.

"Will you always retain the same feeling for Ordener Guldenlew?"

Ethel had scarcely strength to falter, "Always."

The old man drew her to his heart.

"It is well, my daughter! Let me at least bequeath to you my hate, if I cannot leave you the wealth and honors of which I was robbed. Listen! they deprived your old father of rank and glory; they dragged him in irons to the gallows, as if to stain him with every infamy and make him endure every torment. Wretches! Oh, may heaven and hell hear me, and may they be cursed in this life and cursed in their posterity!"

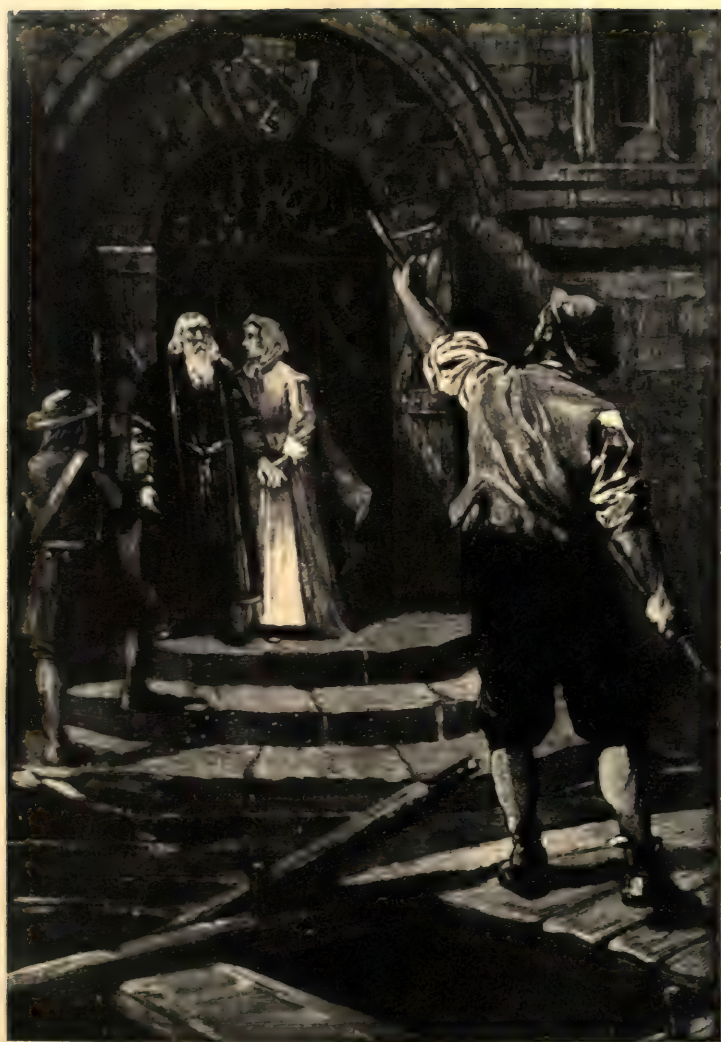
He was silent for a moment; then, embracing his poor daughter, terrified by his curses: "But Ethel, my only glory and my only treasure, tell me, how was your instinct so much more skilful than mine? How did you discover that this traitor bears one of the abhorred names inscribed upon my heart in gall? How did you penetrate his secret?"

She was summoning all her strength to answer, when the door opened.

A man dressed in black, carrying in his hand an ebony wand, and wearing about his neck a chain of unpolished steel, appeared upon the threshold, escorted by halberdiers also dressed in black.

"What do you want?" asked the captive, sharply, and in astonishment.

The man, without replying or looking at him, unrolled a long parchment, to which was fastened by silken threads a seal of green wax, and read aloud: "In the name of his



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Majesty, our most gracious sovereign and lord, Christian the king. Schumacker, prisoner of State in the royal fortress of Munkholm, and his daughter, are commanded to follow the bearer of the said command."

Schumacker repeated his question: "What do you want?"

The man in black, still immovable, prepared to re-read the document.

"That will do," said the old man.

Then, rising, he signed to the surprised and startled Ethel to follow with him this dismal escort.



XLI.

A doleful signal was given, an abject minister of justice knocked at his door and informed him that he was wanted. — JOSEPH DE MAISTRE.

NIGHT had fallen ; a cold wind whistled around the Cursed Tower, and the doors of Vygla ruin rattled on their hinges, as if the same hand had shaken all of them at once.

The wild inhabitants of the tower, the hangman and his family, had gathered about the fire lighted in the middle of the room on the first floor, which cast a fitful glow upon their dark faces and scarlet garments. The children's features were fierce as their father's laughter and haggard as their mother's gaze. Their eyes, as well as those of Becky were fixed on Orugix, who, seated on a wooden stool, seemed to be recovering his breath, his feet covered with

dust, showing that he had but just returned from some distant trip.

"Wife, listen ; listen, children. I've not been gone two whole days merely to bring back bad news. If I am not made executioner to the king before another month is out, I wish I may never tie another slip-noose or handle an axe again. Rejoice, my little wolf-cubs ; your father may leave you the Copenhagen scaffold by way of an inheritance, after all."

"Nychol," asked Becky, "what has happened?"

"And you, my old gypsy," rejoined Nychol, with his boisterous laugh, "rejoice too ! You can buy any number of blue glass necklaces to adorn your long, skinny neck. Our agreement will soon be up ; but never fear, in a month, when you see me chief hangman of both kingdoms, you will not refuse to break another jug with me."¹

"What is it, what is it, father?" asked the children, the older of whom was playing with a bloody rack, while the little one amused himself by plucking alive a young bird which he had stolen from the nest.

"What is it, children?—Kill that bird, Haspar ; it makes as much noise as a rusty saw ; and besides, you should never be cruel. Kill it. — What is it, you say ? Nothing, — a trifle, truly ; nothing, dame Becky, save that within a week from this time ex-chancellor Schumacker, who is a prisoner at Munkholm, after looking me so closely in the face at Copenhagen, and the famous brigand of Iceland, Hans of Klipstadur, may perhaps both pass through my hands at once."

¹ The Gypsy form of marriage.

The red woman's wandering eye assumed an expression of surprised curiosity.

"Schumacker! Hans of Iceland! How is that, Nychol?"

"I'll tell you all about it. Yesterday morning, on the road to Skongen, at Ordals bridge, I met the whole regiment of musketeers from Munkholm marching back to Throndhjem with a very victorious air. I questioned one of the soldiers, who condescended to answer, probably because he did not know why my jerkin and my cart were red. I learned that the musketeers were returning from Black Pillar Pass, where they had cut to pieces various bands of brigands, — that is to say, insurgent miners. Now, you must know, gypsy Becky, that these rebels revolted in Schumacker's name, and were commanded by Hans of Iceland. You must know that his uprising renders Hans of Iceland guilty of the crime of insurrection against royal authority, and Schumacker guilty of high treason, which will naturally lead those two honorable gentlemen to the scaffold or the block. Add to these two superb executions, which cannot fail to bring me in at least fifteen gold ducats each, and to entitle me to the greatest honor in both kingdoms, several other though less important ones —"

"But do tell me," interrupted Becky, "has Hans of Iceland been captured?"

"Why do you interrupt your lord and master, miserable woman?" said the hangman. "Yes, to be sure, the famous, the impregnable Hans of Iceland is a prisoner, together with several other leaders of the brigands, his lieutenants,

who will also bring me in twelve crowns apiece, to say nothing of the sale of their bodies. He was captured, I tell you ; and I saw him, if you must know all the particulars, march by between a double file of soldiers."

The woman and children crowded eagerly about Orugix.

"What ! did you really see him, father ?" asked the children.

"Be quiet, boys. You shriek like a rogue protesting his innocence. I saw him ; he is a giant. His hands were tied behind his back, and his forehead was bandaged. I suppose he was wounded in the head. But never fear, I will soon heal his hurt for him." Accompanying these brutal words with a brutal gesture, the hangman added : "There were four of his comrades behind him, prisoners too and wounded, like him, who were being taken, like him, to Throndhjem, where they are to be tried with ex-chancellor Schumacker by a court of justice presided over by the lord mayor and the present chancellor."

"Father, what did the other prisoners look like ?"

"The first two were a couple of old men, one of whom wore a miner's broad felt hat, and the other a mountaineer's cap ; both seemed utterly disheartened. Of the other two, one was a young miner, who marched along with head up, whistling ; the other, — do you remember, Becky, those travellers who came to this tower some ten days ago, on the night of that terrible storm ?"

"As Satan remembers the day of his fall," replied the woman.

"Did you notice a young man in company with that crazy old doctor with the big periwig, — a young fellow,

I say, who wore a great green cloak, and a cap with a black feather !”

“ Yes, indeed ; I can see him now, saying : ‘ Woman, we have plenty of gold ! ’ ”

“ Well, old woman, I hope I may never wring the neck of anything worse than a grouse, if the fourth prisoner was not that young man. His face, to be sure, was entirely hidden by his feather, his cap, his hair, and his cloak ; besides, he hung his head. But it was the very same dress, the same boots, the same manner. I’ll swallow the stone gallows at Skongen at a single mouthful if it be not the same man ! What do you say to that, Becky ? Would n’t it be a joke if after I had given him something to sustain life he should also receive from me something to cut it short, and should exercise my skill after having tasted my hospitality ? ”

The hangman’s coarse laughter was loud and long ; then he resumed : “ Come, make merry, all of you, and let us drink. Yes, Becky, give me a glass of that beer which scrapes a man’s throat as if he were drinking files, and let me drain it to my future advancement. Come, here’s to the health and prosperity of Nychol Orugix, executioner royal that is to be ! I will confess, you old sinner, that I found it hard work to go to Næs village to hang a contemptible clown for stealing cabbage and chicory. Still, when I thought it over, I felt that thirty-two escalins were not to be sneezed at, and that my hands would not be degraded by turning off mere thieves and riff-raff of that kind until after they had actually beheaded the noble count and ex-chancellor, and the famous demon of Iceland.

I therefore resigned myself, while waiting for my certificate as hangman to the king, to despatch the poor wretch at Nøes village. And here," he added, drawing a leather purse from his wallet, "are the thirty-two escalins for you, old girl."

At this moment three blasts from a horn were heard outside.

"Woman," cried Orugix, "those are the bowmen of the lord mayor."

With these words he hurried downstairs.

An instant later he reappeared, carrying a large parchment, of which he had broken the seal.

"There," said he to his wife, "there's what the lord mayor has sent me. Do you decipher it; for you can read Satan's scrawl. Perhaps it is my promotion already; for since the court is to have a chancellor to preside over it and a chancellor as prisoner at the bar, it is only proper that the man who carries out the sentence should be an executioner royal."

The woman took the parchment, and after studying it for some time, read aloud, while the children stared at her in stupid wonder: "In the name of the Council of the province of Throndhjem, Nychol Orugix, hangman for the province, is hereby ordered to repair at once to Throndhjem, and to carry with him his best axe, block, and black hangings."

"Is that all?" asked the hangman, in a dissatisfied tone.

"That is all," replied Becky.

"Hangman for the province!" muttered Orugix.

He cast an angry glance at the official document, but at last exclaimed: "Well, I must obey and be off. After all, they tell me to bring my best axe and the black hangings. Take care, Becky, that you rub off the spots of rust which have dimmed my axe, and see that the hangings are not stained with blood. We must not be discouraged; perhaps they mean to promote me in payment for this fine execution. So much the worse for the prisoners; they will not have the satisfaction of dying by the hand of an executioner royal."

XLII.

Elvira. What has become of poor Sancho ? He has not appeared in town !

Nuno. Sancho has doubtless contrived to find shelter.

LOPE DE VEGA : *The Best Alcalde is the King.*

COUNT D'AHLEFELD, dragging behind him an ample robe of black satin lined with ermine, his head and shoulders concealed by a large judicial wig, his breast covered with stars and decorations, among which were the collars of the Royal Orders of the Elephant and the Dannebrog, clad, in a word, in the complete costume of the lord chancellor of Denmark and Norway, paced with an anxious air up and down the apartment of Countess d'Ahlefeld, who was alone with him at the moment.

"Come, it is nine o'clock ; the court is about to open ; it must not be kept waiting, for sentence must be pronounced to-night, so that it may be carried out by to-morrow morning at latest. The mayor assures me that the hangman will be here before dawn. Elphega, did you order the boat to take me to Munkholm ?"

"My lord, it has been waiting for you at least half an hour," replied the countess, rising from her seat.

"And is my litter at the door ?"

"Yes, my lord."

"Good! So you say, Elphega," added the count, clapping his hand to his head, "that there is a love-affair between Ordener Guldenlew and Schumacker's daughter?"

"A very serious one, I assure you," replied the countess, with a smile of anger and contempt.

"Who would ever have imagined it? And yet I tell you that I suspected it."

"And so did I," said the countess. "This is a trick played upon us by that confounded Levin."

"Old scamp of a Mecklenburger!" muttered the chancellor; "never fear, I'll recommend you to Arensdorf. If I could only succeed in disgracing him! Ah! see here, Elphega, I have an inspiration."

"What is it?"

"You know that the persons whom we are to try at Munkholm Castle are six in number,—Schumacker, whom I hope I shall have no further cause to fear, to-morrow, at this hour; the colossal mountaineer, our false Hans of Iceland, who has sworn to sustain his character to the end, in the hope that Musdæmon, from whom he has already received large sums of money, will help him to escape,—that Musdæmon really has the most devilish ideas! The other four prisoners are the three rebel chiefs, and a certain unknown character, who stumbled, no one knows how, into the midst of the assembly at Apsyl-Corh, and whom Musdæmon's precautions have thrown into our hands. Musdæmon thinks that the fellow is a spy of Levin de Knud. And indeed, when brought here a prisoner, his first words were to ask for the general;

and when he learned of the Mecklenburger's absence, he seemed dumfounded. Moreover, he has refused to answer any of Musdæmon's questions."

"My dear lord," interrupted the countess, "why have you not questioned him yourself?"

"Really, Elphega, how could I, in the midst of all the business which has overwhelmed me since my arrival? I trusted the affair to Musdæmon, whom it interests as much as it does me. Besides, my dear, the fellow is not of the slightest consequence in himself; he is merely some poor vagabond. We can only turn him to account by representing him to be an agent of Levin de Knud, and as he was captured in the rebel ranks, it would go to prove a guilty connivance between Schumacker and the Mecklenburger, which will suffice to bring about, if not the arraignment, at least the disgrace, of that confounded Levin."

The countess meditated for a moment. "You are right, my lord. But how about this fatal passion of Baron Thorwick for Ethel Schumacker?"

The chancellor again rubbed his head. Then, shrugging his shoulders, he said: "See here, Elphega; neither you nor I are young novices, and we ought to understand men. When Schumacker has been condemned for high treason for the second time; when he has undergone an infamous death on the gallows; when his daughter, reduced to the lowest ranks of society, is forever publicly disgraced by her father's shame, — do you suppose, Elphega, that Ordener Guldenlew will then recall for a single instant this childish flirtation which you call passion, judg-

ing it by the extravagant talk of a crazy girl, or that he will hesitate a single day between the dishonored daughter of a wretched criminal and the illustrious daughter of a great chancellor? We must judge others by ourselves; where do you find that the human heart is so constituted?"

"I trust that you may be right. But I think you will not disapprove of my request to the mayor that Schumacker's daughter might be present at her father's trial, and might be placed in the same gallery with me. I am curious to study the creature."

"All that can throw light upon the affair is valuable," said the chancellor, calmly. "But tell me, does anybody know where Ordener is at present?"

"No one knows; he is the worthy pupil of that old Levin, a knight-errant like him. I believe that he is visiting Wardhus just now."

"Well, well, our Ulrica will settle him. But come, I forget that the court is waiting for me."

The countess detained the chancellor. "One word more, my lord. I asked you yesterday, but your mind was full of other things, and I could not get an answer, — where is my Frederic?"

"Frederic!" said the count, with a melancholy expression, and hiding his face with his hand.

"Yes, answer me; my Frederic? His regiment has returned to Throndhjem without him. Swear to me that Frederic was not in that horrible affair at Black Pillar Pass. Why do you change color at his name? I am in mortal terror."

The chancellor's features resumed their wonted com-

posure. "Make yourself easy, Elphega. I swear that he was not at Black Pillar Pass. Besides, the list of officers killed or wounded in that skirmish has been published."

"Yes," said the countess, growing calmer, "you reassure me. Only two officers were killed, — Captain Lory and that young Baron Randmer, who played so many mad pranks with my poor Frederic at the Copenhagen balls. Oh, I have read and re-read the list, I assure you. But tell me, my lord, did my boy remain at Wahlstrom?"

"He did," replied the count.

"Well, my friend," said the mother, with a smile which she tried to render affectionate, "I have but one favor to ask of you, — that is, to recall Frederic as soon as may be from that frightful region."

The chancellor broke from her suppliant arms, saying, "Madam, the court waits. Farewell. What you ask does not depend on my will." And he quitted the room abruptly.

The countess was left in a sad and pensive mood. "It does not depend upon his will!" said she; "and he has but to utter a word to restore my son to my arms! I always thought that man was genuinely bad."



XLIII.

Is it thus you treat a man in my position ? Is it thus you forget the respect due to justice ? — CALDERON : *Louis Perez of Galicia*.

THE trembling Ethel, separated from her father by the guards upon leaving the Lion of Schleswig tower, was conducted through dim passages, hitherto unknown to her, to a small, dark cell, which was closed as soon as she had entered it. In the wall opposite the door was a large grated opening, through which came the light of links and torches. Before this opening was a bench, upon which sat a woman, veiled and dressed in black, who signed to her to be seated beside her. Ethel obeyed in silent dismay. She looked through the grated window and saw a solemn and imposing scene.

At the farther end of a room hung with black and dimly lighted by copper lamps suspended from the vaulted roof, was a black platform in the shape of a horseshoe,

occupied by seven judges in black gowns, one of whom, placed in the centre upon a higher seat, wore on his breast glittering diamond chains and gold medals. The judge on his right differed from the others in the wearing of a white girdle and an ermine mantle, showing him to be the lord mayor of the province. To the right of the bench was a platform covered with a dais, upon which sat an old man, in bishop's dress; to the left, a table covered with papers, behind which stood a short man with a huge wig, and enveloped in a long black gown.

Opposite the judges was a wooden bench, surrounded by halberdiers holding torches, whose light, reflected back from a forest of pikes, muskets, and partisans, shed a faint glimmer upon the tumultuous heads of a mob of spectators, crowded against the iron railing dividing them from the court-room.

Ethel looked at this spectacle as she might have beheld some waking dream; yet she was far from feeling indifferent to what was about to happen. A secret voice warned her to listen well, because a crisis in her life was at hand. Her heart was a prey to contending emotions; she longed to know instantly what interest she had in the scene before her, or never to know it at all. For some days, the idea that her Ordener was forever lost to her had inspired her with a desperate desire to be done with existence once for all, and to read the book of her fate at a single glance. Therefore, realizing that this was a decisive hour, she watched the sombre picture before her, not so much with aversion as with a sort of impatient, melancholy joy.

She saw the president rise and proclaim in the king's name that the court was opened.

She heard the short, dark man to the left of the bench read, in a low, rapid voice, a long discourse in which her father's name, mixed with the words "conspiracy," "revolt in the mines," and "high treason," frequently recurred. Then she remembered what the dread stranger had told her, in the donjon garden, of the charges against her father; and she shuddered as she heard the man in the black robe conclude his speech with the word "death," pronounced with great emphasis.

She turned in terror to the veiled lady, from whom she shrank with unaccountable fear. "Where are we? What does all this mean?" she timidly asked.

A gesture from her mysterious companion commanded her to be silent and attentive. She again turned her eyes to the court-room. The venerable bishop rose, and Ethel caught these words: "In the name of omnipotent and most merciful God, I, Pamphilus-Luther, bishop of the royal province and town of Throndhjem, do greet the worthy court assembled here in the name of the king, our lord, under God.

"And I say, that having observed that the prisoners brought to this bar are men and Christians, and that they have no counsel, I declare to the worthy judges that it is my purpose to aid them with my poor strength in the cruel position in which it has pleased Heaven to place them.

"Praying that God will deign to strengthen my great weakness, and enlighten my great blindness, I,

bishop of this royal diocese, greet this wise and worthy court."

So saying, the bishop stepped from his episcopal throne, and took his seat upon the prisoners' bench, amid a murmur of applause from the people.

The president then rose, and said in dry tones, "Halberdiers, command silence! My lord bishop, the court thanks your reverence, in the name of the prisoners. Inhabitants of the province of Throndhjem, pay good heed to the king's justice; there can be no appeal from the sentence of the court. Bowmen, bring in the prisoners."

There was an expectant and terrified hush; the heads of the crowd swayed to and fro in the darkness like the waves of a stormy sea, upon which the thunder is about to burst.

Soon Ethel heard a dull sound and a strange stir below her, in the gloomy aisles of the court; the audience moved aside with a thrill of impatient curiosity there was a noise of many feet; halberds and muskets gleamed, and six men, chained and surrounded by guards, entered the room bareheaded. Ethel had eyes for the first of the six alone, a white-headed old man in a black gown. It was her father.

She leaned, almost fainting, against the stone balustrade in front of her; everything swam before her in a confused cloud, and it seemed as if her heart were in her throat. She said in a feeble voice, "O God! help me!"

The veiled woman bent over her and gave her salts to smell, which roused her from her lethargy.

"Noble lady," said she, reviving, "for mercy's sake, speak but one word to convince me that I am not the sport of spirits from hell."

The stranger, deaf to her entreaty, again turned her head toward the court; and poor Ethel, who had somewhat recovered her strength, resigned herself to do the same in silence.

The president rose, and said in slow, solemn tones, "Prisoners, you are brought before us that we may decide whether or not you are guilty of high treason, conspiracy, and armed rebellion against the authority of the king, our sovereign lord. Examine your consciences well, for the charge of leze-majesty rests upon your heads."

At this moment a gleam of light fell upon the face of one of the six prisoners, a young man who held his head down, as if to veil his features with his long hair. Ethel started, and a cold sweat oozed from every pore. She thought she recognized — But no; it was a cruel illusion. The room was but dimly lighted, and men moved about it like shadows; the great polished ebony Christ hanging over the president's chair was scarcely visible.

And yet that young man was wrapped in a mantle which at this distance seemed to be green; his disordered hair was chestnut, and the unexpected gleam which revealed his features — But no; it was not true. It could not be! It was some horrid delusion!

The prisoners were seated on the bench beside the bishop. Schumacker took his place at one end; he was separated from the chestnut-haired young man by his four companions in misfortune, who wore coarse clothes, and

among whom was one of gigantic stature. The bishop sat at the other end of the bench.

Ethel saw the president turn to her father, saying in a stern voice: "Old man, tell us your name, and who you are."

The old man raised his venerable head.

"Once," he replied, looking steadily at the president, "I was Count Griffenfeld and Tönsberg, Prince of Wollin, Prince of the Holy German Empire, Knight of the Royal Orders of the Elephant and the Dannebrog, Knight of the Golden Fleece in Germany and of the Garter in England, Prime Minister, Lord Rector of all our Universities, Lord High Chancellor of Denmark, and —"

The president interrupted him: "Prisoner, the court does not ask who you were, nor what your name once was, but who you are and what it now is."

"Well," answered the old man, quickly, "my name is John Schumacker now; I am sixty-nine years old, and I am nothing but your former benefactor, Chancellor d'Ahlefeld."

The president seemed confused.

"I recognized you, Count," added the ex-chancellor, "and as I thought you did not know me, I took the liberty to remind your Grace that we are old acquaintances."

"Schumacker," said the president, in a voice trembling with concentrated fury, "do not trifle with the court."

The aged prisoner again interrupted him: "We have changed places, noble Chancellor; I used to call you 'd'Ahlefeld,' and you addressed me as 'Count.'"

"Prisoner," replied the president, "you only injure your cause by recalling the infamous decree which already brands your name."

"If that sentence entailed infamy on any one, Count d'Ahlefeld, it was not on me."

The old man half rose as he spoke these words with great emphasis.

The president waved his hand.

"Sit down. Do not insult, in the presence of the court, the judges who condemned you, and the king who surrendered you to those judges. Recollect that his Majesty deigned to grant you your life, and confine yourself to defending it."

Schumacker's only answer was a shrug of the shoulders.

"Have you," asked the president, "anything to say in regard to the charges preferred against you?"

Seeing that Schumacker was silent, the president repeated his question.

"Are you speaking to me?" said the ex-chancellor. "I supposed, noble Count d'Ahlefeld, that you were speaking to yourself. Of what crime do you accuse me? Did I ever give a Judas kiss to a friend? Have I imprisoned, condemned, and dishonored a benefactor, —robbed him to whom I owed everything? In truth, my lord chancellor, I know not why I am brought here. Doubtless it is to judge of your skill in lopping off innocent heads. Indeed, I shall not be sorry to see whether you find it as easy to ruin me as to ruin the kingdom, and whether a single comma will be a sufficient pretext for my death, as one letter of

the alphabet was enough for you to bring on a war with Sweden.”¹

He had scarcely uttered this bitter jest, when the man seated at the table to the left of the bench arose.

“My lord president,” said he, bowing low, “my lord judges, I move that John Schumacker be forbidden to speak, if he continue to insult his Grace, the president of this worshipful court.”

The calm voice of the bishop answered: “Mr. Private Secretary, no prisoner can be deprived of the right to speak.”

“True, Reverend Bishop,” hastily exclaimed the president. “We propose to allow the defence the utmost liberty. I would merely advise the prisoner to moderate his expressions if he understands his own interest.”

Schumacker shook his head, and said coldly: “It seems that Count d’Ahlefeld is more sure of his game than he was in 1677.”

“Silence!” said the president; and instantly addressing the prisoner next to the old man, he asked his name.

A mountaineer of colossal stature, whose forehead was swathed in bandages, rose, saying, “I am Hans, from Klipstadur, in Iceland.”

¹ There were grave differences between Denmark and Sweden, because Count d’Ahlefeld insisted, during the negotiation of a treaty between the two States, that the Danish king should be addressed as *rex Gothorum*, which apparently attributed to him supremacy over Gothland, a Swedish province; while the Swedes persisted in styling him *rex Gotorum*, a vague title, equivalent to the ancient name of Danish sovereigns, — King of the Goths. It is probably to this “h” — the cause not of a war, but of long and threatening negotiations — that Schumacker alluded.

A shudder of horror ran through the crowd, and Schumacker, lifting his head, which had sunk upon his breast, cast a sudden glance at his dreadful neighbor, from whom all his other fellow-prisoners shrank.

"Hans of Iceland," asked the president, when the confusion ceased, "what have you to say for yourself?"

Ethel was as much startled as any of the spectators by the appearance of the famous brigand, who had so long played a prominent part in all her visions of alarm. She fixed her eyes with timid dread upon the monstrous giant, with whom her Ordener had possibly fought, whose victim he perhaps was. This idea again took possession of her soul in all its painful shapes. Thus, wholly absorbed by countless heart-rending emotions, she hardly heeded the coarse, blundering answer of this Hans of Iceland, whom she regarded almost as her Ordener's murderer. She only understood that the brigand declared himself to be the leader of the rebel forces.

"Was it of your own free will," asked the president, "or by the suggestion of others, that you took command of the insurgents?"

The brigand answered: "It was not of my own free will."

"Who persuaded you to commit such a crime?"

"A man named Hacket."

"Who was this Hacket?"

"An agent of Schumacker, whom he also called Count Griffenfeld."

The president turned to Schumacker: "Schumacker, do you know this Hacket?"

"You have forestalled me, Count d'Aldersfeld," rejoined the old man; "I was about to ask you the same question."

"John Schumacker," said the president, "your hatred is ill advised. The court will put the proper value upon your system of defence."

The bishop then said, turning to the short man who seemed to fill the office of recorder and prosecutor: "Mr. Private Secretary, is this Hacker one of your clients?"

"No, your reverence," replied the secretary.

"Does any one know what has become of him?"

"He was not captured: he has disappeared."

It seemed as if the private secretary tried to steady his voice as he said this.

"I rather think that he has vanished altogether," said Schumacker.

The bishop continued: "Mr. Secretary, is any one in pursuit of this Hacker? Has any one a description of him?"

Before the private secretary could answer, one of the prisoners rose. He was a young miner, with a stern, proud face.

"He is easily described," said he, in a firm voice. "This contemptible Hacker, Schumacker's agent, is a man of low stature, with an open countenance like the mouth of hell. Stay, Mr. Bishop; his voice is very like that of the gentleman writing at the table over there, whom your reverence calls, I believe, 'private secretary.' And truly, if the room were not so dark, and the private secretary had less hair to hide his face, I could almost swear that he looked very much like the traitor Hacker."

"Our brother speaks truly," cried the prisoners on either side of the young miner.

"Indeed!" muttered Schumacker, with a look of triumph.

The secretary involuntarily started, whether from fear, or from the indignation which he felt at being compared to Hacket. The president, who himself seemed disturbed, hurriedly exclaimed: "Prisoners, remember that you are only to speak in answer to a question from the court; and do not insult the officers of the law by unworthy comparisons."

"But, Mr. President," said the bishop, "this is a mere matter of description. If the guilty Hacket has points of resemblance to your secretary, it may be useful to —"

The president cut him short.

"Hans of Iceland, you, who have had such frequent intercourse with Hacket, tell us, to satisfy the worthy bishop, whether the fellow really resembles our honorable private secretary."

"Not at all, sir," unhesitatingly answered the giant.

"You see, my lord bishop," added the president.

The bishop acknowledged his satisfaction by a bow, and the president, addressing another prisoner, pronounced the usual formula: "What is your name?"

"Wilfred Kennybol, from the Kiölen Mountains."

"Were you among the insurgents?"

"Yes, sir; the truth at all costs. I was captured in the cursed défile of Black Pillar. I was the chief of the mountaineers."

"Who urged you to the crime of rebellion?"

"Our brothers the miners complained of the royal

protectorate ; and that was very natural, was it not, your worship ? If you had nothing but a mud hut and a couple of paltry fox-skins, you would not like to have them taken from you. The government would not listen to their petitions. Then, sir, they made up their minds to rebel, and begged us to help them. Such a slight favor could not be refused by brothers who say the same prayers and worship the same saints. That's the whole story."

"Did nobody," said the president, "excite, encourage, and direct your insurrection ?"

"There was a Mr. Hacket, who was forever talking to us about rescuing a count who was imprisoned at Munkholm, whose messenger he said he was. We promised to do as he asked, because it was nothing to us to set one more captive free."

"Was not this count's name Schumacker or Griffenfeld, fellow ?"

"Exactly so, your worship."

"Did you never see him ?"

"No, sir ; but if he be that old man who told you that he had so many names just now, I must confess —"

"What ?" interrupted the president.

"That he has a very beautiful white beard, sir ; almost as handsome a one as my sister Maase's husband's father, of the village of Surb ; and he lived to be one hundred and twenty years old."

The darkness of the room prevented any one from seeing whether the president looked disappointed at the mountaineer's simple answer. He ordered the archers to produce certain scarlet flags.

"Wilfred Kennybol," he asked, "do you recognize these flags?"

"Yes, your Grace; they were given to us by Hacket in Count Schumacker's name. The count also distributed arms to the miners; for we did not need them, we mountaineers, who live by our gun and game-bag. And I myself, sir, such as you see me, trussed as I am like a miserable fowl to be roasted, have more than once, in one of our deep valleys, brought down an old eagle flying so high that it looked like a lark or a thrush."

"You hear, judges," remarked the private secretary; "the prisoner Schumacker distributed arms and banners to the rebels, through Hacket."

"Kennybol, asked the president, "have you anything more to say?"

"Nothing, your Grace, except that I do not deserve death. I only lent a hand in brotherly love to the miners, and I'll venture to say before all your worships that my bullet, old hunter as I am, never touched one of the king's deer."

The president, without answering this plea, cross-examined Kennybol's two companions; they were the leaders of the miners. The older of the two, who stated that his name was Jonas, repeated Kennybol's testimony in slightly different words. The other,—the same young man who had noticed such a strong resemblance between the private secretary and the treacherous Hacket,—called himself Norbith, and proudly avowed his share in the rebellion, but refused to reveal anything regarding Hacket and Schumacker, saying that he had sworn secrecy, and had

forgotten everything but that oath. In vain the president tried threats and entreaties; the obstinate youth was not to be moved. Moreover, he insisted that he had not rebelled on Schumacker's account, but simply because his old mother was cold and hungry. He did not deny that he might deserve to die; but he declared that it would be unjust to kill him, because in killing him they would also kill his poor mother, who had done nothing to merit punishment.

When Norbith ceased speaking, the private secretary briefly summed up the heavy charges against the prisoners, and more especially against Schumacker. He read some of the seditious mottoes on the flags, and showed how the general agreement of the answers of the ex-chancellor's accomplices, and even the silence of Norbith bound by a fanatical oath, tended to inculcate him. "There now remains," he said in close, "but a single prisoner to be examined, and we have strong reasons for thinking him the secret agent of the authority who has ill protected the peace of the province of Throndhjem. This authority has favored, if not by his guilty connivance, at least by his fatal negligence, the outbreak of the revolt which must destroy all these unhappy men, and restore Schumacker to the scaffold from which the king's clemency so generously preserved him."

Ethel, whose fears for Ordener were now converted into cruel apprehensions for her father, shuddered at these ominous words, and wept floods of tears when her father rose and said quietly: "Chancellor d'Ahlefeld, I admire your skill. Have you summoned the hangman?"

The unfortunate girl thought her cup of bitterness was full : she was mistaken.

The sixth prisoner now stood up. With a superb gesture he swept back the hair which covered his face, and replied to the president's questions in a clear, firm voice : " My name is Ordener Guldenlew, Baron Thorwick, Knight of the Dannebrog."

An exclamation of surprise escaped the secretary : " The viceroy's son !"

" The viceroy's son !" repeated every voice, as if the words were taken up by countless echoes.

The president shrank back in his seat ; the judges, hitherto motionless upon the bench, bent toward one another in confusion, like trees beaten by opposing winds. The commotion was even greater in the audience. The spectators climbed upon stone cornices and iron rails ; the entire assembly spoke through a single mouth ; and the guards, forgetting to insist upon silence, added their ejaculations to the general uproar.

Only those accustomed to sudden emotions can imagine Ethel's feelings. Who could describe that unwonted mixture of agonizing joy and delicious grief ; that anxious expectation, which was alike fear and hope, and yet not quite either ? He stood before her, but he could not see her. There was her beloved Ordener, — her Ordener, — whom she had believed dead, whom she knew was lost to her ; her friend who had deceived her, and whom she adored with renewed adoration. He was there ; yes, he was there. She was not the victim of a vain dream. Oh, it was really he, — that Ordener, alas ! whom she had seen

in dreams more often than in reality. But did he appear within these gloomy precincts as an angel of deliverance, or a spirit of evil? Was she to hope in him, or to tremble for him? A thousand conjectures crowded upon her at once, and oppressed her mind like a flame choked by too much fuel; all the ideas and sensations which we have suggested flashed through her brain as the son of the Norwegian viceroy pronounced his name. She was the first to recognize him, and before any one else had recognized him, she had fainted.

She soon recovered her senses for the second time, thanks to the attentions of her mysterious neighbor. With pale cheeks, she again opened her eyes, in which the tears had been suddenly dried. She cast an eager glance at the young man still standing unmoved amid the general confusion; and after all agitation had ceased in the court and among the people, Ordener Guldenlew's name still rang in her ears. With painful alarm she observed that he wore his arm in a sling, and that his wrists were chained; she noticed that his mantle was torn in several places, and that his faithful sword no longer hung at his side. Nothing escaped her solicitude, for the eye of a lover is like that of a mother. Her whole soul flew to the rescue of him whom she could not shield with her body; and, be it said to the glory and the shame of love, in that room, which contained her father and her father's persecutors, Ethel saw but one man.

Silence was gradually restored. The president resumed his examination of the viceroy's son. "My lord Baron," said he, in a tremulous voice.

"I am not 'my lord Baron' here," firmly answered Ordener. "I am Ordener Guldenlew, just as he who was once Count Griffenfeld is John Schumacker here."

The president hesitated for a moment, then went on: "Well, Ordener Guldenlew, it is doubtless by some unlucky accident that you are brought before us. The rebels must have captured you while you were travelling, and forced you to join them, and it is probably in this way that you were found in their ranks."

The secretary rose: "Noble judges, the mere name of the viceroy's son is a sufficient plea for him. Baron Ordener Guldenlew cannot by any possibility be a rebel. Our illustrious president has given a clear explanation of his unfortunate arrest among the rebels. The noble prisoner's only error is in not sooner revealing his name. We request that he may be set free at once, abandoning all charges against him, and only regretting that he should have been seated upon a bench degraded by the criminal Schumacker and his accomplices."

"What would you do?" cried Ordener.

"The private secretary," said the president, "withdraws the charges against you."

"He is wrong," replied Ordener, in a loud, clear voice; "I alone of all here should be accused, judged, and condemned." He paused a moment, and added in a less resolute tone, "For I alone am guilty."

"You alone guilty!" exclaimed the president.

"You alone guilty!" repeated the secretary.

A fresh burst of astonishment was heard in the audience. The wretched Ethel shuddered; she did not reflect

that this declaration from her lover would save her father. She thought only of her Ordener's death.

"Silence in the court!" said the president, possibly taking advantage of this brief tumult to collect his thoughts and recover his self-possession. "Ordener Guldenlew," he resumed, "explain yourself."

The young man mused an instant, then sighed heavily, and uttered these words in a tone of calm submission: "Yes, I know that an infamous death awaits me; I know that my life might have been bright and fair. But God reads my heart; God alone! I am about to accomplish the most urgent duty of my life. I am about to sacrifice to it my blood, perhaps my honor; but I feel that I shall die without regret or remorse. Do not be surprised at my words, judges; there are mysteries in the soul and in the destiny of man which men cannot penetrate, and which are judged in heaven alone. Hear me, therefore, and act toward me as your conscience may dictate when you have pardoned these unfortunate men, and more especially the much injured Schumacker, who has already, in his long captivity, expiated many more crimes than any one man could ever commit. Yes, I am guilty, noble judges, and I alone. Schumacker is innocent; these other unhappy men were merely led astray. I am the author of the insurrection among the miners."

"You!" exclaimed the president and his private secretary, with a singular look upon their faces.

"I! and do not interrupt me again, gentlemen. I am in haste to finish; for by accusing myself I exonerate these poor prisoners. I excited the miners in Schumacker's

name; I distributed those banners to the rebels: I sent them money and arms in the name of the prisoner of Munkholm. Hacket was my agent."

At the name of Hacket, the private secretary made a gesture of stupefied amazement.

Ordener continued: "I will not trespass on your time, gentlemen. I was captured among the miners, whom I persuaded to revolt. I alone did everything. Now judge me. If I have proved my guilt, I have also proved the innocence of Schumacker and the poor wretches whom you deem his accomplices."

The young man spoke these words, his eyes raised to heaven. Ethel, almost lifeless, scarcely breathed; but it seemed to her that Ordener, although he exculpated her father, pronounced his name most bitterly. The young man's language terrified and amazed her, although she could not comprehend it. Of all she heard, she grasped nothing but misery.

A sentiment of similar nature seemed to engross the president. He was scarcely able to believe his ears. Nevertheless, he asked the viceroy's son: "If you are indeed the sole author of this revolt, what was your object in instigating it?"

"I cannot tell you."

Ethel shivered when she heard the president reply in a somewhat angry tone: "Had you not an intrigue with Schumacker's daughter?"

But Ordener, though in chains, advanced toward the bench, and exclaimed, in accents of indignation: "Chancellor d'Ahlefeld, content yourself with my life, which I

place in your hands; respect a noble and innocent girl. Do not a second time attempt to dishonor her."

Ethel, who felt the blood rise to her face, did not comprehend the meaning of the words, "a second time," upon which her defender laid such emphasis; but by the rage expressed in the president's features, it seemed that he understood them.

"Ordener Guldenlew, do not forget the respect due to the king's justice and the officers of the law. I reprimand you in the name of the court. I now summon you anew to declare your purpose in committing the crime of which you accuse yourself."

"I repeat that I cannot tell you."

"Was it not to deliver Schumacker?" inquired the secretary.

Ordener was silent.

"Do not persist in silence, prisoner," said the president; "it is proved that you have been in communication with Schumacker, and your confession of guilt rather implicates than exonerates the prisoner of Munkholm. You have paid frequent visits to Munkholm, and your motive was surely more than mere curiosity. Let this diamond buckle bear witness."

The president took from the table a diamond buckle.

"Do you recognize it as your property?"

"Yes. By what chance?"

"Well! One of the rebels gave it, before he died, to our private secretary, averring that he received it from you in payment for rowing you across from Throndhjem to Munkholm fortress. Now I ask you, judges, if such a

price paid to a common sailor does not prove the importance laid by the prisoner, Ordener Guldenlew, upon his reaching that prison, which is the one where Schumacker was confined ? ”

“ Ah ! ” exclaimed the prisoner Kennybol, “ what your grace says is true ; I recognize the buckle. It is the same story which our poor brother Guldou Stayper told me.”

“ Silence,” said the president ; “ let Ordener Guldenlew answer.”

“ I will not deny,” replied Ordener, “ that I desired to see Schumacker. But this buckle has no significance. It is forbidden to enter the fort wearing diamonds. The sailor who rowed me across complained of his poverty during our passage. I flung him this buckle, which I was not allowed to wear.”

“ Pardon me, your Grace,” interrupted the private secretary, “ the rule does not include the viceroy’s son. You could therefore — ”

“ I did not wish to give my name.”

“ Why not ? ” asked the president.

“ I cannot tell you.”

“ Your relations with Schumacker and his daughter prove that the object of your conspiracy was to set them free.”

Schumacker, who had hitherto shown no sign of attention save an occasional scornful shrug of the shoulders, rose : “ To set me free ! The object of this infernal plot was to compromise and ruin me, as it still is. Do you think that Ordener Guldenlew would confess his share in this crime unless he had been captured among the rebels ?

Oh, I see that he inherits his father's hatred of me! And as for the relations which you suppose exist between him and myself and my daughter, let him know, that accursed Guldenlew, that my daughter also inherits my loathing for him, — for the whole race of Guldenlews and d'Ahlefelds!"

Ordener sighed deeply, while Ethel in her heart disclaimed her father's assertion; and he fell back upon his bench, quivering with wrath.

"The court will decide for itself," said the president.

Ordener, who, at Schumacker's words, had silently cast down his eyes, seemed to awake: "Oh, hear me, noble judges! You are about to examine your consciences; do not forget that Ordener Guldenlew is alone guilty; Schumacker is innocent. These other unfortunate men were deceived by my agent, Hacket. I did everything else."

Kennybol interrupted him: "His worship says truly, judges, for it was he who undertook to bring Hans of Iceland to us; I only hope that name may not bring me ill luck. I know that it was this young man who ventured to seek him out in Walderhog cave, to persuade him to be our leader. He confided the secret of his undertaking to me in Surb village, at the house of my brother Braal. And for the rest, too, the young gentleman says truly; we were deceived by that confounded Hacket, whence it follows that we do not deserve death."

"Mr. Secretary," said the president, "the hearing is ended. What are your conclusions?"

The secretary rose, bowed several times to the court,

passed his finger under the folds of his lace band, without taking his eyes from the president's face. At last he pronounced the following words in a dull, measured voice: "Mr. President, most worthy judges! It is a true bill. Ordener Guldenlew, who has forever tarnished the glory of an illustrious name, has only succeeded in establishing his own guilt without proving the innocence of ex-chancellor Schumacker and his accomplices, Hans of Iceland, Wilfred Kennybol, Jonas, and Norbith. I require the court to declare the six prisoners guilty of the crime of high treason in the first degree."

A vague murmur rose from the crowd. The president was about to dismiss the court, when the bishop asked for a brief hearing.

"Learned judges, it is proper that the prisoners' defence should be heard last. I could wish that they had a better advocate, for I am old and feeble, and have no other strength than that which proceeds from God. I am confounded at the secretary's severe sentence. There is no proof of my client Schumacker's crime. There is no evidence that he has had any direct share in the insurrection; and since my other client, Ordener Guldenlew, confesses that he made unlawful use of Schumacker's name, and moreover that he is the sole author of this damnable sedition, all evidence against Schumacker disappears; you should therefore acquit him. I recommend to your Christian indulgence the other prisoners, who were only led astray like the Good Shepherd's sheep; and even young Ordener Guldenlew, who has at least the merit, very great in the sight of God, of confessing his

crime. Reflect, judges, that he is still at the age when a man may err, and even fall; but God does not refuse to support or to raise him up. Ordener Guldenlew bears scarce a fourth the burden of years which weigh down my head. Place in the balance of your judgment his youth and inexperience, and do not so soon deprive him of the life which the Lord has but lately given him."

The old man ceased, and took his place beside Ordener, who smiled; while at the invitation of the president, the judges rose from the bench, and silently crossed the threshold of the dread scene of their deliberations.

While a handful of men were deciding the fate of six fellow-beings within that terrible sanctuary, the prisoners remained motionless upon their seat between two files of halberdiers. Schumacker, his head on his breast, seemed absorbed in meditation. The giant stared to the right and left with stupid assurance; Jonas and Kennybol, with clasped hands, prayed in low tones, while their comrade, Norbith, stamped his foot or shook his chains with a convulsive start. Between him and the venerable bishop, who was reading the penitential psalms, sat Ordener, with folded arms and eyes lifted to heaven.

Behind them was the noise of the crowd, which swelled high when the judges left the room. The famous prisoner of Munkholm, the much-dreaded demon of Iceland, and above all the viceroy's son, were the objects of every thought, every speech, and every glance. The uproar, mingled with groans, laughter, and confused cries, rose and fell like a flame flickering in the wind.

Thus passed several hours of anxious expectation, so

long that every one was astonished that they could be contained in a single night. From time to time a glance was cast toward the door of the anteroom; but there was nothing to be seen, save the two soldiers pacing to and fro with their glittering partisans before the fatal entrance, like two silent ghosts.

At last the lamps and torches began to burn dim, and the first pale rays of dawn were piercing the narrow windows of the room when the awful door opened. Profound silence instantly, and as if by magic, took the place of all the confusion; and the only sounds heard were the hurried breathing and the vague slight stir of the multitude in suspense.

The judges, proceeding slowly from the anteroom, resumed their places on the bench, the president at their head.

The private secretary, who had seemed absorbed in thought during their absence, bowed and said: "Mr. President, what sentence does the court, from whose decision there is no appeal, pronounce in the king's name? We are ready to hear it with religious respect."

The judge, seated at the president's right hand, rose, holding a roll of parchment: "His Grace, our illustrious president, exhausted by the length of this session, has deigned to commission me, lord mayor of the province of Throndhjem, and the natural president of this worshipful court, to read in his stead the sentence pronounced in the name of the king. I am about to fulfil this honorable but painful duty, requesting the audience to hear the king's impeccable justice in silence."

The lord mayor's voice then assumed a grave and solemn intonation, and every heart beat faster.

"In the name of our revered master and lawful sovereign, King Christian, we, the judges of the Supreme Court of the province of Throndhjem, summoned to decide in the cases of John Schumacker, prisoner of the State; Wilfred Kennybol, native of the Kiölen Mountains; Jonas, royal miner; Norbith, royal miner; Hans of Klipstadur, in Iceland; and Ordener Guldenlew, Baron Thorwick, Knight of the Dannebrog, all accused of high treason and leze-majesty in the first degree (Hans of Iceland being moreover charged with the crimes of murder, arson, and robbery), do find:—

"I. That John Schumacker is not guilty;

"II. That Wilfred Kennybol, Jonas, and Norbith are guilty, but are recommended to mercy, because they were led astray;

"III. That Hans of Iceland is guilty of all the crimes laid to his charge;

"IV. That Ordener Guldenlew is guilty of high treason and leze-majesty in the first degree."

The judge paused an instant as if to take breath. Ordener fixed upon him a look of celestial joy.

"John Schumacker," resumed the judge, "the court acquits you and remands you to prison;

"Kennybol, Jonas, and Norbith, the court commutes the penalty which you have incurred, to imprisonment for life, and a fine of one thousand crowns each;

"Hans of Klipstadur, murderer and incendiary, you will be taken this night to Munkholm parade-ground,

and hanged by the neck until you are dead, dead, dead !

“Ordener Guldenlew, traitor, after having been stripped of your titles in presence of this court, you will be conducted this very night to the same place, with a lighted torch in your hand, and there your head shall be hewn off, your body burned, your ashes strewn to the winds, and your head exposed upon a stake. Let all withdraw. Such is the sentence rendered by the king’s justice.”

The lord mayor had scarcely ended these fatal words, when a shriek rang through the room. This shriek horrified the spectators even more than did the fearful terms of the death sentence ; this shriek for a brief moment turned the calm and radiant face of the condemned Ordener pale.



XLIV.

Misfortune made them equals. — CHARLES NODIER.

ALL was over now; Ordener's work was done. He had saved the father of the woman he loved; he had saved her too by preserving her father to protect her. The young man's noble plot to save Schumacker's life had succeeded; nothing else mattered now; it only remained for him to die.

Let those who deem him guilty or foolish judge the generous Ordener now, as he judges himself in his own soul with holy rapture. For it had been his one thought, when he entered the rebel ranks, that if he could not prevent Schumacker from carrying out his guilty purpose, he might at least help him to escape punishment by drawing it upon his own head.

"Alas!" he thought, "Schumacker is undoubtedly guilty; but embittered as he is by misfortune and imprisonment, his crime is excusable. He sighs to be set free; he struggles to acquire his liberty, even by rebellion. Besides, what would become of my Ethel if her father were taken from her; if she should lose him by the gallows, if fresh disgrace should blast his name, what would become of her, helpless and unprotected, alone in her cell or roaming through a world of foes?" This thought determined him to make the sacrifice, and he joyfully prepared for it. It is a lover's greatest happiness to lay down his life, I do not say for the life, but for a smile or a tear, of the loved object.

He was accordingly captured with the rebels, was dragged before the judges assembled to condemn Schumacker, his generous falsehood was uttered, he was sentenced, he must die a cruel death, suffer shameful torments, leave behind him a stained name; but what cared the noble youth? He had saved his Ethel's father.

He sat chained in a damp dungeon, where light and air never entered save through dark holes; beside him was a supply of food for the remnant of his existence, — a loaf of black bread and a jug of water; an iron collar weighed down his neck; iron fetters were about his hands and feet. Every hour that passed robbed him of a greater portion of his life than a year would bear away from other mortals. He was lost in a delicious dream.

"Perhaps my memory will not die with me, at least in one human heart. Perhaps she will deign to shed a tear in return for the blood I so freely shed for her; perhaps

she will sometimes heave a sigh for him who sacrificed his life for her ; perhaps in her virgin thoughts the dim image of her friend may sometimes appear. And who knows what lies behind the veil of death ? Who knows if our souls, freed from their material prison, may not sometimes return to watch over the souls of those they love, and hold mysterious communion with those sweet companions still prisoned in the flesh, and in secret bring them angelic comfort and heavenly bliss ?”

And yet bitter reflections would sometimes mingle with these consoling meditations. The hatred which Schumacker had expressed for him at the very moment of his self-sacrifice oppressed him. The agonized shriek which he had heard at the same instant with his death sentence had moved him deeply ; for he alone, of all the assembly, recognized that voice and understood that misery. And should he never again see his Ethel ? Must his last moments be passed within the self-same walls that contained her, and he be still unable to touch her soft hand once more, once more to hear the gentle voice of her for whom he was about to die ?

He had yielded thus to those vague, sad musings which are to the mind what sleep is to the body, when the hoarse creak of rusty bolts struck harshly on his ear, already attuned to the music of the sphere to which he was so soon to take his flight. The heavy iron door grated upon its hinges. The young prisoner rose calmly, almost gladly, for he thought that the executioner had come for him, and he had already cast aside his life like the cloak beneath his feet.

He was mistaken. A slender white figure stood upon the threshold, like a radiant vision. Ordener doubted his own eyes, and wondered if he were not already in heaven. It was she ; it was his Ethel !

The girl fell into his fettered embrace ; she covered his hands with tears, and dried them with her long black hair. Kissing his chains, she bruised her pure lips upon those infamous irons ; she did not speak, but her whole heart seemed ready to burst forth in the first word which might break through her sobs.

He felt the most celestial joy which he had known since his birth. He gently pressed his Ethel to his breast, and the combined powers of earth and hell could not at that moment have loosed the arms which encircled her. The knowledge of his approaching death lent a certain solemnity to his rapture ; and he held his Ethel as close as if he had already taken possession of her for all eternity.

He did not ask this angel how she had gained access to him. She was there : could he waste a thought on anything else ? Nor was he surprised. He never asked how this proscribed, feeble, lonely girl, in spite of triple doors of iron and triple ranks of soldiers, had contrived to open her own prison and that of her lover ; it seemed to him quite simple ; he had a perfect appreciation of the power of love.

Why speak with the voice when the soul can speak as readily ? Why not allow the body to listen silently to the mysterious language of the spirit ? Both were silent, because there are certain emotions which can find expression in silence only.

At last the young girl lifted her head from her lover's throbbing heart. "Ordener," said she, "I am here to save you;" and she uttered these words of hope with a pang.

Ordener smiled, and shook his head.

"To save me, Ethel! You deceive yourself; escape is impossible."

"Alas! I am but too well aware of that. This castle is crowded with soldiers, and every door is guarded by archers and jailers who never sleep." She added with an effort: "But I bring you another means of safety."

"No, no; your hope is vain. Do not delude yourself with idle fancies, Ethel; a few hours hence the axe will cruelly dispel them."

"Oh, do not say so, Ordener! You shall not die. Oh, spare me that dreadful thought! Or rather, no; let me behold it in all its horror, to give me strength to save you and sacrifice myself."

There was a strange expression in the young girl's voice.

Ordener gazed at her tenderly. "Sacrifice yourself! What do you mean?"

She hid her face in her hands, and sobbed almost inarticulately, "Oh, God!"

The struggle was brief; she overcame her emotion; her eyes sparkled, her lips wore a smile. She was as beautiful as an angel ascending from hell to heaven.

"Listen, my own Ordener: your scaffold shall never be reared. If you will but promise to marry Ulrica d'Ahlefeld, you may live."

"Ulrica d'Ahlefeld! That name from your lips, my Ethel!"

"Do not interrupt me," she continued, with the calm of a martyr undergoing the last pang; "I am sent here by Countess d'Ahlefeld. She promises to gain your pardon from the king, if in return you will agree to bestow your hand upon her daughter. I am here to obtain your oath to marry Ulrica and live for her. She chose me as her messenger because she thought that my voice might have some influence over you."

"Ethel," said the condemned man, in icy tones, "farewell! When you leave this cell, bid the hangman hasten his coming."

She rose, stood before him one moment, pale and trembling, then her knees gave way beneath her, and she sank to the stone floor with clasped hands.

"What have I done to him?" she muttered faintly.

Ordener silently fixed his eyes upon the flags.

"My lord," she said, dragging herself to him on her knees, "you do not answer me. Will you not speak to me once more? Then there is nothing left for me but to die."

A tear stood in the young man's eye.

"Ethel, you no longer love me."

"Oh, God!" cried the poor girl, clasping his knees. "No longer love you! You say that I no longer love you, Ordener! Did you really say those words?"

"You no longer love me, for you despise me."

He repented these cruel words as soon as he had uttered them; for Ethel's tone was heart-rending, as she threw her

adored arms around his neck, and exclaimed in a voice broken by tears : "Forgive me, my beloved Ordener ; forgive me as I forgive you. I despise you ! Great heavens ! Are you not my pride, my idol, my all ? Tell me, was there aught in my words but deep love and ardent adoration ? Alas ! your stern language wounds me sorely, when I came here to save you, my idolized Ordener, by sacrificing my whole life for yours."

"Well," replied the young man, softened by her tears, and kissing them away, "was it not a want of esteem to suppose that I would buy my life by forsaking you, by basely renouncing my oaths, by sacrificing my love ?" He added, fixing his eye on Ethel : "My love, for which I am about to shed my blood !"

Ethel uttered a deep groan as she answered : "Hear me, Ordener, before you judge me so rashly. Perhaps I have more strength than usually falls to the lot of a weak woman. From our lofty prison window I saw them build your scaffold on the parade. Ordener, you do not know what fearful agony it is to see the slow preparations for the death of one whose life is an indissoluble part of your own ! Countess d'Ahlefeld, at whose side I sat when I heard the judge pronounce your death sentence, came to the cell to which I had returned with my father. She asked me if I would save you ; she proposed this hateful means. Ordener, my poor happiness must perish ; I must give you up, renounce you forever ; yield to another my Ordener, poor lonely Ethel's only joy, or deliver you to the executioner. They bid me choose between my own misery and your death. I cannot hesitate."

He kissed this angel's hand with respectful worship.

"Neither do I hesitate, Ethel. You would not offer me life with Ulrica d'Ahlefeld's hand if you knew why I die."

"What? What secret mystery —"

"Let me keep this one secret from you, my beloved Ethel. I must die without letting you know whether you owe me gratitude or hatred for my death."

"You must die! Must you then die? Oh, God! it is but too true, and the scaffold stands ready even now; and no human power can save my Ordener, whom they will slay! Tell me, — cast one look upon your slave, your wife, and tell me, promise me, beloved Ordener, that you will listen to me without anger. Are you very sure — answer me as you would answer to God — that you could not be happy with that woman, that Ulrica d'Ahlefeld? Are you very sure, Ordener? Perhaps she is, she surely is, handsome, amiable, virtuous. She is far superior to her for whom you perish. Do not turn away your head, dear friend, dear Ordener. You are so noble and so young to mount the scaffold. Think! you might live with her in some gay city where you would lose all memory of this fatal dungeon; your days would flow by peacefully, without a thought of me. I consent, — you may drive me from your heart, erase my image from your thoughts, Ordener. Only live! Leave me here alone; let me be the one to die. And believe me, when I know that you are in the arms of another, you need not fear for me; I shall not suffer long."

She paused; her voice was drowned in tears. Still

her grief-stricken countenance was radiant with her longing to win the ill-omened victory which must be her death.

Ordener said: "No more of this, Ethel. Let no name but yours and mine pass our lips at such a moment."

"Alas! alas!" she replied, "then you persist in dying?"

"I must. I shall go to the scaffold gladly for your sake; I should go to the altar with any other woman with horror and aversion. Say no more; you wound and distress me."

She wept, and murmured: "He will die, oh, God, a death of infamy!"

The condemned man answered with a smile: "Believe me, Ethel, there is less dishonor in my death than in such a life as you propose."

At this instant his eye, glancing away from his weeping Ethel, observed an old man in clerical dress standing in the shadow under the low, arched door. "What do you want?" said he, hastily.

"My lord, I came with the Countess d'Ahlefeld's messenger. You did not see me, and I waited silently until you should notice me."

In fact, Ordener had eyes for Ethel only; and she, at the sight of Ordener, had forgotten her companion.

"I am," continued the old man, "the minister whose duty it is —"

"I understand," said the young man; "I am ready."

The minister advanced toward him.

"God is also ready to receive you, my son."

"Sir," said Ordener, "your face is not unknown to me; I must have seen you elsewhere."

The minister bowed. "I too recognize you, my son; we met in Vygla tower. We both proved upon that occasion the fallibility of human words. You promised me the pardon of twelve unhappy prisoners, and I put no faith in your promise, being unable to guess that you were the viceroy's son; and you, my lord, who reckoned upon your power and your rank when you made me that promise —"

Ordener finished the thought which Athanasius Munder dared not put into words.

"Cannot now obtain pardon even for myself. You are right, sir. I had too little reverence for the future, it has punished me by showing me that its power is greater than mine."

The minister bent his head. "God is great!" said he.

Then he raised his kind eyes to Ordener, adding, "God is good!"

Ordener, who seemed preoccupied, exclaimed, after a brief pause: "Listen, sir; I will keep the promise which I made you in Vygla tower. When I am dead, go to Bergen, seek out my father, the viceroy of Norway, and tell him that the last favor which his son asks of him is to pardon your twelve protégés. He will grant it, I am sure."

A tear of emotion moistened the wrinkled cheek of Athanasius.

"My son, your soul must be filled with noble thoughts, if in the self-same hour you can reject your own par-

don and generously implore that of others. For I heard your refusal; and although I blame such dangerous and inordinate affection, I was deeply touched by it. Now I ask myself, — *unde scelus?* — how could a man who approaches so near to the model of true justice soil his conscience with the crime for which you are condemned?"

"Father, I did not tell my secret to this angel; I cannot reveal it to you. But believe that I am not condemned for any crime of mine."

"What? Explain yourself, my son!"

"Do not urge me," firmly answered the young man. "Let me take my secret with me to the grave."

"This man cannot be guilty," muttered the minister.

Then drawing from his breast a black crucifix, he placed it on a sort of altar rudely shaped from a granite slab resting against the damp prison wall. Beside the crucifix he laid a small lighted lamp which he had brought with him, and an open Bible. "My son, meditate and pray; I will return a few hours hence. Come," he added, turning to Ethel, who during this conversation had preserved a solemn silence, "we must leave the prisoner. Our time has passed."

She rose, calm and radiant; a divine spark flashed from her eyes as she said: "Sir, I cannot go yet; you must first unite Ethel Schumacker to her husband, Ordener Guldenlew."

She looked at Ordener.

"If you were still free, happy, and powerful, my Ordener, I should weep, and I should shrink from linking

my fatal destiny with yours. But now that you need no longer dread the contagion of my misfortune; that you, like me, are a captive, disgraced and oppressed; now that you are about to die, I come to you, hoping that you will at least deign, Ordener, my lord and husband, to allow her who could never have shared your life, to be your companion in death; for you love me too much, do you not, to doubt for an instant that I shall die with you?"

The prisoner fell at her feet, and kissed the hem of her gown.

"You, old man," she resumed, "must take the place of family and parents. This cell shall be our temple, this stone our altar. Here is my ring; we kneel before God and before you. Bless us, and pronounce the sacred words which shall unite Ethel Schumacker and Ordener Guldenlew, her lord."

And they knelt together before the priest, who regarded them with mingled astonishment and pity.

"How, my children! What would you do?"

"Father," said the girl, "time presses. God and death wait for us."

In this life we sometimes meet with irresistible powers, supreme wills to which we yield instantly as if they were more than human. The priest raised his eyes, sighing: "May the Lord forgive me if I do wrong! You love each other; you have but little time to love on earth. I do not think I shall fail in my allegiance to God if I legalize your love."

The sweet and solemn ceremony was performed. With the final blessing of the priest, they rose a wedded pair.



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The prisoner's face beamed with painful joy ; he seemed for the first time conscious of the bitterness of death, now that he realized the sweetness of life. The features of his companion were sublime in their expression of grandeur and simplicity ; she still felt the modesty of a maiden, and already exulted as a young wife.

"Hear me, Ordener," said she ; "is it not fortunate that we must die, since we could never have been united in life? Do you know, love, what I will do? I will stand at the window of my cell, where I can see you mount the scaffold, so that our spirits may wing their flight to heaven together. If I should die before the axe falls, I will wait for you ; for we are husband and wife, my adored Ordener, and this night our coffin shall be our bridal bed."

He pressed her to his throbbing heart, and could only utter these words, which for him summed up all human happiness : "Ethel, you are mine!"

"My children," said the chaplain, in a broken voice, "say farewell ; it is time."

"Alas!" cried Ethel.

All her angelic strength returned, and she knelt before the prisoner : "Farewell, my beloved Ordener ! My lord, give me your blessing."

The prisoner yielded to this touching request, then turned to take leave of the venerable Athanasius Munder. The old man was kneeling at his feet.

"What do you wish, father?" he asked in surprise.

The old man gazed at him with sweet humility : "Your blessing, my son."

“May Heaven bless you, and grant you all the happiness which your prayers call down upon your brother men!” replied Ordener, in touched and solemn tones.

Soon the sepulchral arches heard their last kisses and their last farewells; soon the rude bolts creaked noisily into place, and the iron door separated the youthful pair who were to die, only to meet again in eternity.



XLV.

I will give two thousand crowns to any man who shall deliver over to me Louis Perez, dead or alive. — CALDERON : *Louis Perez of Galicia*.

“**B**ARON VÆTHAÛN, colonel of the Munkholm musketeers, which of the men who fought under your command at Black Pillar Pass took Hans of Iceland prisoner? Name him to the court, that he may receive the thousand crowns reward offered for the capture.”

The president of the court thus addressed the colonel of musketeers. The court was in session; for according to old Norwegian custom, a court from whose sentence there is no appeal cannot adjourn until the sentence has been carried out. Before the judges stood the giant, who had just been led in again, with the rope round his neck from which he was soon to hang.

The colonel, seated at the table with the private secretary, rose and bowed to the court and to the bishop, who had reascended his throne.

"My lord judges, the soldier who captured Hans of Iceland is present. His name is Toric-Belfast, second musketeer of my regiment."

"Let him stand forth," replied the president, "and receive the promised reward."

A young soldier in the Munkholm uniform stepped forward.

"You are Toric-Belfast?" asked the president.

"Yes, your worship."

"It was you who took Hans of Iceland prisoner?"

"Yes, by the aid of Saint Beelzebub, I did, please your worship."

A heavy bag of money was placed before the bench.

"Do you recognize this man as the famous Hans of Iceland?" added the president, pointing to the fettered giant.

"I am better acquainted with my Kitty's pretty face than with that of Hans of Iceland; but I declare, by the halo of Saint Belphegor, that if Hans of Iceland be anywhere, it is in the shape of that big devil."

"Advance, Toric-Belfast," said the president. "Here are the thousand crowns offered by the lord mayor."

The soldier hurried toward the bench, when a voice rose from the crowd: "Munkholm musketeer, you never captured Hans of Iceland."

"By all the blessed devils!" cried the soldier, turning around, "I own nothing but my pipe and the moment of

time in which I speak; but still I promise to give ten thousand gold crowns to the man who says that, if he can prove his words."

And folding his arms, he cast an assured glance over the audience: "Well! let the man who spoke, show himself."

"It is I!" said a small man, elbowing his way through the crowd.

The new-comer was wrapped in sealskin, like a Greenland, his outlandish garb hanging stiffly about him. His beard was black; and thick hair of the same color, falling over his red eyebrows, concealed a hideous face. Neither his hands nor his arms were visible.

"Oh, it is you, is it?" said the soldier, with a loud laugh. "And who, then, do you say it was, my fine gentleman, that had the honor of capturing that infernal giant?"

The little man shook his head, and said with a malicious smile: "It was I."

At this instant Baron Væthaün fancied that he recognized the mysterious being who had warned him at Skongen of the arrival of the rebels; Chancellor d'Ahlefeld thought he recognized his host at Arbar ruin; and the private secretary, a certain peasant from Oëlmœ, who wore a similar dress, and who had pointed out the lair of Hans of Iceland. But the three being separated, they could not impart to one another this fleeting impression, which the differences of feature and costume, afterward observed, must have soon dissipated.

"Indeed! it was you, was it?" ironically observed the soldier. "If it were not for your Greenland seal's costume,

by the look which you cast at me, I should be tempted to take you for another ridiculous dwarf, who tried to pick a quarrel with me at the Spladgest, a fortnight or so ago. It was the very day that they brought in the body of Gill Stadt, the miner."

"Gill Stadt!" broke in the little man, with a shudder.

"Yes, Gill Stadt!" repeated the soldier, with an air of indifference, — "the rejected lover of a girl who was sweetheart to a comrade of mine, and for whose sake he died, like the fool that he was."

The little man said in hollow tones: "Was there not also the body of an officer of your regiment at the Spladgest?"

"Exactly; I shall remember that day as long as I live. I forgot that it was the hour for the tattoo, and I was arrested when I got back to the fort. That officer was Captain Dispolsen."

At this name the private secretary rose.

"These two fellows abuse the patience of the court. We beg the president to cut short this idle chatter."

"By my Kitty's good name! I ask nothing better," said Toric-Belfast, "provided your worships will give me the thousand crowns offered for the head of Hans, for it was I who took him prisoner."

"You lie!" cried the little man.

The soldier clapped his hand to his sword: "It is very lucky for you, you rascal, that we are in the presence of the court, where a soldier, even a Munkholm musketeer, must never resort to force."

"The reward," coldly observed the little man, "belongs

to me; for if it were not for me, you would never have won Hans of Iceland's head."

The indignant soldier swore that it was he who captured Hans of Iceland, when, wounded on the field of battle, he was just beginning to revive.

"Well," said his opponent, "you may have captured him, but it was I who struck him down. If it had not been for me, you could never have taken him prisoner; therefore the thousand crowns are mine."

"It is false," replied the soldier. "It was not you who struck him down; it was an evil spirit, clad in the skins of wild beasts."

"It was I!"

"No, no!"

The president ordered both parties to be silent; then, again asking Colonel Væthaün whether it was really Toric-Belfast who brought Hans of Iceland into camp a prisoner, at his assent he declared that the prize belonged to the soldier.

The small man gnashed his teeth, and the musketeer greedily stretched out his hands for the sack.

"One moment!" cried the little man. "Mr. President, that money, according to the lord mayor's proclamation, was to be given to him who took Hans of Iceland."

"Well?" said the judge.

The little man turned to the giant: "That man is not Hans of Iceland."

A murmur of surprise ran through the room. The president and private secretary moved uneasily in their chairs.

"No!" emphatically reiterated the small man, "the money does not belong to the cursed musketeer of Munkholm, for that man is not Hans of Iceland."

"Halberdiers," said the president, "remove this madman; he has lost his senses."

The bishop interposed: "Will you allow me, most worthy President, to remark that you may, by refusing to hear this man, destroy the prisoner's last chance? I demand that he be confronted with the stranger."

"Reverend Bishop, the court will grant your request," replied the president; and addressing the giant: "You have declared yourself to be Hans of Iceland; do you persist in that statement?"

The prisoner answered: "I do; I am Hans of Iceland."

"You hear, Bishop?"

The little man shouted in the same breath with the president: "You lie, mountaineer of Kiölen! you lie! Do not persist in bearing a name which must crush you; remember that it has been fatal to you already."

"I am Hans from Klipstadur, in Iceland," repeated the giant, his eye riveted on the private secretary.

The small man approached the Munkholm soldier, who, like the rest of the audience, had watched this scene with eager curiosity.

"Mountaineer of Kiölen," he cried, "they say that Hans of Iceland drinks human blood. If you be he, drink. Here it is."

And scarcely were the words out of his mouth, when, tossing his sealskin mantle over his shoulder, he plunged a

dagger into the soldier's heart, and flung his dead body at the giant's feet.

A cry of fright and horror followed ; the soldiers guarding the giant started back. The small man, swift as lightning, rushed upon the defenceless mountaineer, and with another blow of his dagger, laid him upon the first corpse. Then flinging off his cloak, his false hair, and black beard, he revealed his wiry limbs, hideously attired in the skins of wild beasts, and a face which inspired the beholders with even greater horror than did the bloody dagger which he brandished aloft, reeking with a double murder.

"Ha! judges, where is Hans of Iceland now?"

"Guards, seize that monster!" cried the startled judge.

Hans hurled his dagger into the centre of the room.

"It is useless to me if there are no more Munkholm soldiers here."

With these words, he yielded unresistingly to the halberdiers and bowmen who surrounded him, prepared to lay siege to him, as to a city. They chained the monster to the prisoner's bench ; and a litter bore away his victims, one of whom, the mountaineer, still breathed.

It is impossible to describe the various emotions of terror, astonishment, and indignation which, during this fearful scene, agitated the people, the guards, and the judges. When the brigand had taken his place, calm and unmoved, upon the fatal bench, a feeling of curiosity overcame every other impression, and breathless attention restored quiet.

The venerable bishop rose : "My lord judges —"

The bandit interrupted him: "Bishop of Thronthjem, I am Hans of Iceland do not take the trouble to plead for me."

The private secretary rose: "Noble President —"

The monster cut him short: "Private Secretary, I am Hans of Iceland; do not take the pains to accuse me."

Then, his feet in a pool of blood, he ran his bold, fierce eye over the court, the bowmen, and the crowd; and it seemed as if each of them trembled with fear at the glance of that one man, unarmed, chained, and alone.

"Listen, judges; expect no long speeches from me. I am the demon of Klipstadur. My mother was old Iceland, the land of volcanoes. Once that land was but one huge mountain; it was crushed by the hand of a giant, who fell from heaven, and rested on its highest peak. I need not speak of myself. I am a descendant of Ingulf the Destroyer, and I bear his spirit within me. I have committed more murders and kindled more fires than all of you put together ever uttered unjust sentences in your lives. I have secrets in common with Chancellor d'Ahlefeld. I could drink every drop of blood that flows in your veins with delight. It is my nature to hate mankind, my mission to harm them. Colonel of the Munkholm musketeers, it was I who warned you of the march of the miners through Black Pillar Pass, sure that you would kill numbers of men in those gorges; it was I who destroyed a whole battalion of your regiment by hurling granite boulders upon their heads. I did it to avenge my son. Now, judges, my son is dead; I came here in search of death. The soul of Ingulf oppresses me, because I must

bear it alone, and can never transmit it to an heir. I am tired of life, since it can no longer be an example and a lesson to a successor. I have drunk enough blood; my thirst is quenched. Now, here I am; you may drink mine."

He was silent, and every voice repeated his awful words.

The bishop said: "My son, what was your object in committing so many crimes?"

The brigand laughed: "I faith, I swear, reverend Bishop, it was not like your brother, the bishop of Borglum, with a view to enrich myself.¹ There was something in me which drove me to it."

"God does not always dwell in his ministers," meekly replied the scanty old man. "You would insult me, but I only wish I could defend you."

"Your reverence wastes his breath. Go ask your other brother, the bishop of Sælbolt, in Iceland, to defend me. By Ingulf! it is a strange thing that two bishops should protect me, — one in my cradle, the other at my tomb. Bishop, you are an old fool."

"My son, do you believe in God?"

"Why not? There must be a God for us to blaspheme."

"Cease, unhappy man! You are about to die, and you will not kiss the feet of Christ —"

Hans of Iceland shrugged his shoulders.

¹ Certain chronicles assert that in 1025 a bishop of Borglum made himself notorious by his depredations. He is said to have kept pirates in his pay, who infested the coast of Norway.

"If I did so, it would be after the fashion of the constable of Roll, who pulled the king over as he kissed his foot."

The bishop seated himself, deeply moved.

"Come, judges," continued Hans of Iceland, "why this delay? If I were in your place and you in mine, I would not keep you waiting so long for your death sentence."

The court withdrew. After a brief deliberation they returned, and the president read aloud the sentence, which declared that Hans of Iceland was to be "hung by the neck until he was dead, dead, dead."

"That's good," said the brigand. "Chancellor d'Ahlefeld, I know enough about you to obtain a like sentence for you. But live, since you do naught but injure men. Oh, I am sure now that I shall not go to Nistheim!"¹

The private secretary ordered the guards who led him away to place him in the Lion of Schleswig tower, until a dungeon could be prepared for him in the quarters of the Munkholm regiment, where he might await his execution.

"In the quarters of the Munkholm musketeers!" repeated the monster, with a growl of pleasure.

¹ According to popular superstition, Nistheim was the hell reserved for those who died of disease or old age.



XLVI.

However, the corpse of Ponce de Leon, which had remained beside the fountain, having been disfigured by the sun, the Moors of Alpuxares took possession of it and bore it to Grenada. — É. H.: *The Captive of Ochali*.

BEFORE dawn of the day so many of whose events we have already traced, at the very hour when Ordener's sentence was pronounced at Munkholm, the new keeper of the Throndhjem Spladgest, Benignus Spia-gudry's former assistant and present successor, Oglypiglap, was abruptly aroused from his mattress by a violent series of raps, which fairly shook the building. He rose reluctantly, took his copper lamp, whose dim light dazzled his drowsy eyes, and went, swearing at the dampness of the dead-house, to open to those who waked him so early from his sleep.

They were fishers from Sparbo, who carried upon a litter, strewed with reeds, rushes, and seaweed, a corpse which they had found in the waters of the lake.

They laid down their burden within the gloomy walls, and Oglypiglap gave them a receipt for it, so that they might claim their fee.

Left alone in the Spladgest, he began to undress the corpse, which was remarkable for its length and leanness. The first thing which caught his eye as he raised the cloth which covered it was a vast periwig.

"Why, really," said he, "this outlandish wig has passed through my hands before ; it belonged to that young French dandy. . . . And," he added, continuing his investigations, "here are the high boots of poor postilion Cramner, who was killed by his horses, and — What the devil does this mean ? — the full black suit of Professor Syngramtax, that learned old foggy, who drowned himself not long ago ! Who can this new-comer be that comes here clad in the cast-off apparel of all my ancient acquaintance ?"

He examined the face of the dead by the light of his lamp, but in vain ; the features, already decomposed, had lost their original shape and color. He felt in the pockets, and drew out some scraps of parchment soaked with water and stained with mud ; he wiped them carefully on his leather apron, and succeeded in deciphering on one of them these disconnected and half-effaced phrases : "Rudbeck, Saxon the grammarian. Arngrimsson, bishop of Holum. — There are but two counties in Norway, Larvig and Jarlsberg, and but one barony. — Silver mines exist only at Kongsberg ; loadstone and asbestos, at Sund-Moer ; ame-

thyst, at Guldbrandsdal; chalcedony, agate, and jasper, at the Färöe Islands. — At Noukahiva, in time of famine, men eat their wives and children. — Thormodr Torfusson; Isleif, bishop of Scalholt, first historian of Iceland. — Mercury played at chess with the Moon, and won the seventy-second part of a day. — Mælstrom, whirlpool. — *Hirundo, hirudo*. — Cicero, chick pea; glory. — The learned Frode. — Odin consulted the head of Mimer, the wise. — (Mahomet and his dove, Sertorius and his hind.) — The more the soil — the less gypsum it contains — ”

“I can scarcely believe my eyes!” he cried, dropping the parchment; “it is the writing of my old master, Benignus Spiagudry!”

Then, examining the corpse afresh, he recognized the long lean hands, the scanty hair, and the whole build of the unfortunate man.

“They were not so much out of the way, after all,” thought he, shaking his head, “who charged him with sacrilege and necromancy. The Devil carried him off to drown him in Lake Sparbo. What poor fools we mortals be! Who would ever have thought that Dr. Spiagudry, after taking so many people to board in his hostelry of the dead, would come here at last from afar to be cared for himself!”

The little Lapp philosopher lifted the body, to remove it to one of his six granite beds, when he found that something heavy was fastened about the unhappy Spiagudry’s neck by a leather cord.

“Probably the stone with which the Devil pitched him into the lake,” he muttered.

He was mistaken ; it was a small iron box, upon which, on examining it closely, after wiping it carefully, he discovered a large shield-shaped padlock.

“ Of course there is some deviltry in this box,” said he ; “ the man was a sacrilegious sorcerer. I will hand it over to the bishop ; it may contain an evil spirit.”

Then, taking it from the corpse, which he placed in the inner room, he hurried away to the bishop’s palace, muttering a prayer as he went, as a charm against the dreadful box under his arm.



XLVII.

Is it a man or an infernal spirit that speaks thus? What mischievous spirit torments thee thus? Show me the relentless foe who inhabits thy heart. — MATURIN.

HANS of Iceland and Schumacker were in the same cell in the Schleswig tower. The acquitted ex-chancellor paced slowly to and fro, his eyes heavy with bitter tears; the condemned brigand laughed at his chains, though surrounded by guards.

The two prisoners studied each other long and silently; it seemed as if both felt themselves and mutually recognized each other as enemies of mankind.

“Who are you?” at length asked the ex-chancellor.

“I will tell you my name,” replied the bandit, “to make you shun me. I am Hans of Iceland.”

Schumacker advanced toward him.

"Take my hand," said he.

"Do you wish me to devour it?"

"Hans of Iceland," rejoined Schumacker, "I like you because you hate mankind."

"And for that reason I hate you."

"Hark ye, I hate men, as you do, because they have returned me evil for good."

"You do not hate them as I do; I hate them because they have returned me good for evil."

Schumacker shuddered at the monster's expression. In vain he conquered his natural disposition; he could not sympathize with this fiend.

"Yes," he exclaimed, "I abhor men because they are false, ungrateful, cruel. I owe to them all the misery of my life."

"So much the better! I owe them all the pleasure of mine."

"What pleasure?"

"The pleasure of feeling their quivering flesh throb beneath my teeth, their hot blood moisten my parched throat; the rapture of crushing living beings against sharp rocks, and hearing the shriek of my victims mingle with the sound of their breaking limbs. These are the pleasures which I owe to men."

Schumacker shrank in horror from the monster whom he had approached with something like pride in his resemblance to him. Pierced with shame, he hid his wrinkled face in his hands; for his eyes were full of tears of anger, not against mankind, but against himself. His great and noble heart began to revolt at the hatred he had

so long cherished, when he saw it reflected in Hans of Iceland's heart as in a fearful mirror.

"Well," said the monster, with a sneer, — "well, enemy of man, dare you boast your likeness to me?"

The old man shuddered. "Oh, God! Rather than hate mankind as you do, let me love them."

Guards came to remove the monster to a more secure cell. Schumacker was left alone in his dungeon to dream; but he was no longer the enemy of mankind.

XLVIII.

Keep me, O Lord, from the hands of the wicked ;
Preserve me from the violent man ;
Who have purposed to thrust aside my step.
The proud have hid a snare for me, and cords ;
They have spread a net by the wayside ;
They have set gins for me.

Psalms cxl. 4.

THE fatal hour had come ; the sun showed but half his disk above the horizon. The guards were doubled throughout Munkholm castle ; before each door paced fierce, silent sentinels. The noises of the town seemed louder and more confused than usual as they ascended to the dark towers of the fortress, itself a prey to strange excitement. The mournful sound of muffled drums was heard in every courtyard ; now and again cannon growled ; the heavy bell in the donjon tolled slowly, with sullen, measured strokes ; and from every direction boats loaded with people hastened toward the fearful rock.

A scaffold hung with black, around which an impatient mob swarmed in ever-increasing numbers, rose from the castle parade-ground in the centre of a hollow square of troops. Upon the scaffold a man clad in red serge walked up and down, now leaning upon the axe in his hand, and

now fingering a billet and block upon the funeral platform. Close at hand a stake was prepared, before which several pitch torches burned. Between the scaffold and the stake was planted a post, from which hung the inscription: "ORDENER GULDENLEW, TRAITOR." A black flag floated from the top of the Schleswig tower.

At this moment Ordener appeared before the judges, still assembled in the court-room. The bishop alone was absent; his office as counsel for the defence had ended.

The son of the viceroy was dressed in black, and wore upon his neck the collar of the Dannebrog. His face was pale but proud. He was alone; for he had been led forth to torture before Chaplain Athanasius Munder returned to his cell.

Ordener's sacrifice was already inwardly accomplished. And yet Ethel's husband still clung to life, and might perhaps have chosen another night than that of the tomb for his wedding night. He had prayed and dreamed many dreams in his dreary cell. Now he was beyond all prayers and all dreams. He was strong in the strength imparted by religion and by love.

The crowd, more deeply moved than the prisoner, eagerly gazed at him. His illustrious rank, his horrible fate, awakened universal envy and pity. Every spectator watched his punishment, without comprehending his crime. In every human heart lurks a strange feeling which urges its owner to behold the tortures of others as well as their pleasures. Men seek with awful avidity to read destruction upon the distorted features of one who is about to die, as if some revelation from heaven or from

order and prepared to pronounce the fatal formula against Ordener, who remained calm and motionless, when a side door opened to the right of the bench.

An officer of the Church entered and announced his reverence, the bishop of Thronthjem. He entered hurriedly, accompanied by another ecclesiastic, on whose arm he leaned.

"Stop, Mr. President!" he exclaimed with a strength of which a man of his age seemed hardly capable. "Stop! Heaven be praised! I am in time."

The audience listened with renewed interest, foreseeing some fresh development. The president turned angrily to the bishop: "Allow me to inform your reverence that your presence here is wholly unnecessary. The court is about to degrade from his rank the prisoner, who will suffer the penalty of his crime directly."

"Forbear," said the bishop, "to lay hands on one who is pure in the sight of God. The prisoner is innocent."

The cry of astonishment which burst from the spectators was only matched by the cry of terror uttered by the president and private secretary.

"Yes, tremble, judges!" resumed the bishop, before the president could recover his usual presence of mind; "tremble! for you are about to shed innocent blood."

As the president's agitation died away, Ordener arose in consternation. The noble youth feared lest his generous ruse had been discovered, and proofs of Schumacker's guilt had been found.

"Bishop," said the president, "in this affair crime seems to evade us, being transferred from one to another. Do



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not trust to any mere appearance. If Ordener Guldenlew be innocent, who, then, is guilty?"

"Your grace shall know," replied the bishop. Then showing the court an iron casket which a servant had brought in behind him: "Noble lords, you have judged in darkness; within this casket is the miraculous light which shall dissipate that darkness."

The president, private secretary, and Ordener, all seemed amazed at the sight of the mysterious casket.

The bishop added: "Noble judges, hear me. To-day, as I returned to my palace, to rest from the fatigues of the night and to pray for the prisoners, I received this sealed iron box. The keeper of the Spladgest, I was told, brought it to the palace this morning to be given to me, declaring that it undoubtedly contained some Satanic charm, as he had found it on the body of the sacrilegious Benignus Spiagudry, which had just been fished out of Lake Sparbo."

Ordener listened more eagerly than ever. All the spectators were as still as death. The president and private secretary hung their heads guiltily. They seemed to have lost all their cunning and audacity. There is a moment in the life of every sinner when his power vanishes.

"After blessing this casket," continued the bishop, "we broke the seal, which, as you can still see, bears the ancient and now extinct arms of Griffenfeld. We did indeed find a devilish secret within. You shall judge for yourselves, venerable sirs. Lend me your most earnest attention, for human blood is at stake, and the Lord will hold you accountable for every drop that you may shed."

Then opening the terrible casket, he drew forth a slip of parchment, upon which was written the following testimony :—

I, Blaxtham Cumbysulsum, doctor, being about to die, do declare that of my own free will and pleasure I have placed in the hands of Captain Dispolsen, the agent, at Copenhagen, of the former Count Griffenfeld, the enclosed document, drawn up wholly by the hand of Turiaf Musdæmon, servant of the chancellor, Count d'Ahlefeld, to the end that the said captain may make such use of it as shall seem to him best; and I pray God to pardon my crimes.

Given under my hand and seal at Copenhagen, this eleventh day of January, 1699.

CUMBYSULSUM.

The private secretary shook like a leaf. He tried to speak, but could not. The bishop handed the parchment to the pale and agitated president.

"What do I see?" exclaimed the latter, as he unfolded the parchment. "A note to the noble Count d'Ahlefeld, upon the means of legally ridding himself of Schumacker! I—I swear, reverend Bishop—"

The paper dropped from his trembling fingers.

"Read it, read it, sir," said the bishop. "I doubt not that your unworthy servant has abused your name as he has that of the unfortunate Schumacker. Only see the result of your uncharitable aversion to your fallen predecessor. One of your followers has plotted his ruin in your name, doubtless hoping to make a merit of it to your Grace."

These words revived the president, as showing him that the suspicions of the bishop, who was acquainted with the

entire contents of the casket, had not fallen upon him. Ordener also breathed more freely. He began to see that the innocence of Ethel's father might be made manifest at the same time with his own. He felt a deep surprise at the singular fate which had led him to pursue a fearful brigand to recover this casket, which his old guide, Benignus Spiagudry, bore about him all the time; that it was actually following him while he was seeking for it. He also reflected on the solemn lesson of the events which, after ruining him by means of this same fatal casket, now proved the instrument of his salvation.

The president, recovering himself, read with much show of indignation, in which the entire audience shared, a lengthy memorandum, in which Musdæmon set forth all the details of the abominable scheme which we have seen him execute in the course of this story. Several times the private secretary attempted to rise and defend himself, but each time he was frowned down. At last the odious reading came to an end amid a murmur of universal horror.

"Halberdiers, seize that man!" said the president, pointing to the private secretary.

The wretch, speechless and almost lifeless, stepped from his place, and was cast into the criminal dock, followed by the hoots of the populace.

"Judges," said the bishop, "shudder and rejoice. The truth, which has just been brought home to your consciences, will now be even more strongly confirmed by the testimony of our honored brother, Athanasius Munder, chaplain to the prisons of this royal town."

It was indeed Athanasius Munder who accompanied the bishop. He bowed to his superior in the Church and to the court, then at a sign from the president, proceeded as follows: "What I am about to state is the truth. May Heaven punish me if I utter a word with any other object than to do my duty! From what I saw this morning in the cell of the viceroy's son, I was led to think that the young man was not guilty, although your lordships had condemned him upon his own confession. Now, I was called, a few hours since, to give the last spiritual consolations to the unfortunate mountaineer so cruelly murdered before your very eyes, and whom you condemned, worthy sirs, as being Hans of Iceland. The dying man said to me: 'I am not Hans of Iceland; I am justly punished for having assumed his name. I was paid to play the part by the chancellor's private secretary; he is called Musdæmon; and it was he who managed the whole revolt under the name of Hacket! I believe him to be the only guilty man in this whole matter.' Then he asked me to give him my blessing, and advised me to make haste and repeat his last words to the court. God is my witness. May I save the shedding of innocent blood, and not cause that of the guilty to flow!"

He ceased, again bowing to his bishop and the judges.

"Your Grace sees," said the bishop to the president, "that one of my clients was not mistaken when he found so much resemblance between Hacket and your private secretary."

"Turiaf Musdæmon," said the president to the prisoner, "what have you to say in your defence?"

Musdæmon looked at his master with an expression which alarmed him. He had recovered his usual impudence, and after a brief pause, answered: "Nothing, sir."

The president resumed in a weak and faltering voice: "Then you acknowledge yourself guilty of the crime with which you are charged? You confess yourself to be the author of a conspiracy alike against the State and against one John Schumacker?"

"I do, my lord," replied Musdæmon.

The bishop rose. "Mr. President, that there may be no shadow of doubt in this affair, will your grace ask the prisoner if he had any accomplices?"

"Accomplices?" repeated Musdæmon.

He hesitated a moment. The president wore a look of awful anxiety.

"No, my lord Bishop," he said at last.

The president's look of relief fell full upon him.

"No, I had no accomplices," repeated Musdæmon, still more emphatically. "I concocted this plot through affection for my master, who knew nothing of it, to destroy his enemy, Schumacker."

The eyes of prisoner and president met once more.

"Your grace," said the bishop, "must see that as Musdæmon had no accomplices, Baron Ordener Guldenlew must be innocent."

"Then why, worthy Bishop, did he confess his guilt?"

"Mr. President, why did that mountaineer persist that he was Hans of Iceland at the risk of his life? God alone knows our secret motives."

Ordener took up the word: "Judges, I can tell you my

motive, now that the real criminal has been discovered. I accused myself falsely to save the former chancellor, Schumacker, whose death would have left his daughter without a protector."

The president bit his lip.

"We request the court," said the bishop, "to proclaim the innocence of our client, Ordener Guldenlew."

The president responded with a nod; and at the request of the lord mayor, they finished their examination of the terrible casket, which contained nothing more except Schumacker's titles of nobility, and a few letters from the Munkholm prisoner to Captain Dispolsen,—bitter, but not criminal letters, which alarmed no one but Chancellor d'Ahlefeld.

The court then withdrew; and after a brief deliberation, while the curious crowd, gathered on the parade, waited with stubborn impatience to see the viceroy's son led forth to die, and the executioner nonchalantly paced the scaffold, the president pronounced in a scarcely audible voice the death sentence of Turiaf Musdæmon, the acquittal of Ordener Guldenlew, and the restoration of all his honors, titles, and privileges.



XLIX.

What will you sell me your carcass for, my boy?
I would not give you, in faith, a broken toy.

Saint Michael and Satan (Old Miracle Play).

THE remnant of the regiment of Munkholm musketeers had returned to their old quarters in the barracks, which stood in the centre of a vast, square courtyard within the fortress. At night-fall the doors of this building were barricaded, all the soldiers withdrawing into it, with the exception of the sentinels upon the various towers, and the handful of men on guard before the military prison adjoining the barracks. This, being the safest and best watched place of confinement in Munkholm, contained the two prisoners sentenced to be hanged on the following morning, Hans of Iceland and Musdæmon.

Hans of Iceland was alone in his cell. He was stretched upon the floor, chained, his head upon a stone; a feeble

light filtered through a square grated opening, cut in the heavy oak door which divided his cell from the next room, where he heard his jailers laugh and swear, and heard the sound of the bottles which they drained, and the dice which they threw upon a drumhead. The monster silently writhed in the darkness, his limbs twitched convulsively, and he gnashed his teeth.

All at once he lifted his voice and called aloud. A turnkey appeared at the grating: "What do you want?" said he.

Hans of Iceland rose. "Mate, I am cold; my stone bed is hard and damp. Give me a bundle of straw to sleep on, and a little fire to warm myself."

"It is only fair," replied the turnkey, "to give a little comfort to a poor devil who is going to be hung, even if he be the Iceland Devil. I will bring you what you want. Have you any money?"

"No," replied the brigand.

"What! you, the most famous robber in Norway, and you have not a few scurvy gold ducats in your pouch?"

"No," repeated the brigand.

"A few little crowns?"

"I tell you, no!"

"Not even a few paltry escalins?"

"No, no, nothing; not enough to buy a rat's skin or a man's soul."

The turnkey shook his head: "That's a different matter; you have no right to complain. Your cell is not so cold as the one you will have to sleep in to-morrow, and yet I'll be bound you won't notice the hardness of that bed."

So saying, the jailer withdrew, followed by the curses of the monster, who continued to rattle his chains, which gave forth a hollow clang as if they were breaking slowly under repeated and violent jerks and pulls.

The door opened. A tall man, dressed in red serge, carrying a dark lantern, entered the cell, accompanied by the jailer who had refused the prisoner's request. The latter at once became perfectly quiet.

"Hans of Iceland," said the man in red, "I am Nychol Orugix, executioner of the province of Throndhjem; to-morrow, at sunrise, I am to have the honor of hanging your Excellency upon a fine new gallows in Throndhjem market-place."

"Are you very sure that you will hang me?" replied the brigand.

The executioner laughed. "I wish you were as sure to rise straight into heaven by Jacob's ladder as you are to mount the scaffold by Nychol Orugix's ladder."

"Indeed?" said the monster, with a malicious grin.

"I tell you again, Sir Brigand, that I am hangman for the province."

"If I were not myself I should like to be you," replied the brigand.

"I can't say the same for you," rejoined the hangman; then rubbing his hands with a conceited and complacent smirk, he added: "My friend, you are right; ours is a fine trade. Ah! my hand knows the weight of a man's head."

"Have you often tasted blood?" asked the brigand.

"No; but I have often used the rack."

"Have you ever devoured the entrails of a living child?"

"No ; but I have crushed men's bones in a vise ; I have broken their limbs upon the wheel ; I have dulled steel saws upon their skulls ; I have torn their quivering flesh with red-hot pincers ; I have burned the blood in their open veins by pouring in a stream of molten lead and boiling oil."

"Yes," said the brigand, with a thoughtful look, "you have your pleasures too."

"In fact," added the hangman, "Hans of Iceland though you be, I imagine that my hands have released more human souls than yours, to say nothing of your own, which you must render up to-morrow."

"Always provided that I have one. Do you suppose, then, executioner of Throndhjem, that you can release the spirit of Ingulf from Hans of Iceland's mortal frame without its carrying off your own ?"

The executioner laughed heartily. "Indeed, we shall see to-morrow."

"We shall see," said the brigand.

"Well," said the executioner, "I did not come here to talk of your spirit, but only of your body. Harken ! your body by law belongs to me after your death ; but the law gives you the right to sell it to me. Tell me what you will take for it ?"

"What I will take for my corpse ?" said the brigand.

"Yes, and be reasonable."

Hans of Iceland turned to his jailer : "Tell me, mate, how much do you ask for a bundle of straw and a handful of fire ?"

The jailer reflected. "Two gold ducats."

"Well," said the brigand to the hangman, "you must give me two gold ducats for my corpse."

"Two gold ducats!" cried the hangman. "It is horribly dear. Two gold ducats for a wretched corpse! No, indeed! I'll give no such price."

"Then," quietly responded the monster, "you shall not have it."

"Then you will be thrown into the common sewer, instead of adorning the Royal Museum at Copenhagen or the collection of curiosities at Bergen."

"What do I care?"

"Long after your death, people will flock to look at your skeleton, saying, 'Those are the remains of the famous Hans of Iceland!' Your bones will be nicely polished, and strung on copper wire; you will be placed in a big glass case, and dusted carefully every day. Instead of these honors, consider what awaits you if you refuse to sell me your body; you will be left to rot in some charnel-house, where you will be the prey of worms and other vermin."

"Well, I shall be like the living, who are perpetually preyed upon by their inferiors and devoured by their superiors."

"Two gold ducats!" muttered the hangman; "what an exorbitant price! If you will not come down in your terms, my dear fellow, we can never make a trade."

"It is my first and probably my last trade; I am bent on having it a good one."

"Consider that I may make you repent of your obstinacy. To-morrow you will be in my power."

"Do you think so?" These words were uttered with a look which escaped the hangman.

"Yes; and there is a certain way of tightening a slip-knot — but if you will only be reasonable, I will hang you in my best manner."

"Little do I care what you do to my neck to-morrow," replied the monster, with a mocking air.

"Come, won't you be satisfied with two crowns? What can you do with the money?"

"Ask your comrade there," said the brigand, pointing to the turnkey; "he charges me two gold ducats for a handful of straw and a fire."

"Now by Saint Joseph's saw," said the hangman, angrily addressing the turnkey, "it is shocking to make a man pay its weight in gold for a fire and a little worthless straw."

"Two ducats!" the turnkey replied sourly; "I've a good mind to make him pay four! It is you, Master Nychol, who act like a regular screw in refusing to give this poor prisoner two gold ducats for his corpse, when you can sell it for at least twenty to some learned old foggy or some doctor."

"I never paid more than twenty escalins for a corpse in my life," said the hangman.

"Yes," replied the jailer, "for the body of some paltry thief, or some miserable Jew, that may be; but everybody knows that you can get whatever you choose to ask for Hans of Iceland's body."

Hans of Iceland shook his head.

"What business is it of yours?" said Orugix, curtly;

"do I interfere with your plunder,—with the clothes and jewels that you steal from the prisoners, and the dirty water which you pour into their thin soup, and the torture to which you put them, to extort money from them? No, I never will give two gold ducats."

"No straw and no fire for less than two gold ducats," replied the obstinate jailer.

"No corpse for less than two gold ducats," repeated the unmoved brigand.

The hangman, after a brief pause, stamped his foot angrily, saying: "Well, I've no time to waste with you. I am wanted elsewhere." He drew from his waistcoat a leather bag, which he opened slowly and reluctantly. "There, cursed demon of Iceland, there are your two ducats. Satan would never give you as much for your soul as I do for your body, I am sure."

The brigand accepted the gold. The turnkey instantly held out his hand to take it.

"One instant, mate; first give me what I asked for."

The jailer went out, and soon returned with a bundle of dry straw and a pan of live coals, which he placed beside the prisoner.

"That's it," said the brigand, giving him the two ducats; "I'll make a warm night of it. One word more," he added in an ominous tone. "Does not this prison adjoin the barracks of the Munkholm musketeers?"

"It does," said the jailer.

"And which way is the wind?"

"From the east, I think."

"Good," said the brigand.

"What are you aiming at, comrade?" asked the jailer.

"Oh, nothing," replied the brigand.

"Farewell, comrade, until to-morrow morning early."

"Yes, to-morrow," repeated the brigand.

And the noise of the heavy door, as it closed, prevented the jailer and his companion from hearing the fierce, jeering laughter which accompanied these words.



L.

Do you hope to end with another crime? — ALEX. SOUMET.

LET us now take a look at the other cell in the military prison adjoining the barracks, which holds our old acquaintance, Turiaf Musdœmon.

It may seem surprising that Musdœmon, crafty and cowardly as he was, should so readily confess his crime to the court which condemned him, and so generously conceal the share of his ungrateful master, Chancellor d'Ahlefeld, in it.

However, Musdœmon had not experienced a change of heart. His noble frankness was perhaps the greatest proof of cunning which he could possibly have given. When he saw his infernal intrigue so unexpectedly exposed, beyond all hope of denial, he was for an instant stunned and terrified. Conquering his alarm, his extreme

shrewdness soon showed him that as it was impossible to destroy his chosen victims, he must bend all his energies to saving himself. Two plans at once presented themselves: the first, to throw all the blame upon Count d'Ahlefeld, who had so basely deserted him; the second, to assume the whole burden of the crime himself. A vulgar mind would have grasped at the former; Musdæmon chose the latter. The chancellor was chancellor, after all; besides, there was nothing in the papers which directly implicated him, although they contained overwhelming evidence against his secretary. Then, his master had given him several meaning looks; this was enough to confirm him in his purpose to suffer himself to be condemned, confident that Count d'Ahlefeld would connive at his escape, though less from gratitude for past service than through his need for future aid.

He therefore paced his prison, which was dimly lighted by a wretched lamp, never doubting that the door would be thrown open during the night. He studied the architecture of the old stone cell, built by kings whose very names have almost vanished from the pages of history, and was much surprised to find a wooden plank, which echoed back his tread as if it covered some subterranean vault. He also observed a huge iron ring cemented into the arched roof, from which hung a fragment of rope. Time passed; and he listened impatiently to the clock on the tower as it slowly struck the hours, its mournful toll resounding through the silence of the night.

At last there was a footfall outside his cell; his heart beat high with hope. The massive bolt creaked; the pad-

look dropped; and as the door opened, his face beamed with delight. It was the same character in scarlet robes whom we have just encountered in Hans of Iceland's prison. He had a coil of hempen cord under his arm, and was accompanied by four halberdiers in black, armed with swords and partisans.

Musdemon still wore the wig and gown of a magistrate. His dress seemed to impress the man in red, who bowed low as if accustomed to respect that garb, and said with some hesitation: "Sir, is our business with your worship?"

"Yes, yes," hastily replied Musdemon, confirmed in his hope of escape by this polite address, and failing to observe the bloody hue of the speaker's garments.

"Your name," said the man, his eyes fixed on a parchment which he had just unrolled, "is Turiaf Musdemon, I believe."

"Just so. Do you come from the chancellor, my friend?"

"Yes, your worship."

"Do not fail, when you have done your errand, to assure his Grace of my undying gratitude."

The man in red looked at him in amazement. "Your—gratitude!"

"Yes, to be sure, my friend: for it will probably be out of my power to thank him in person very soon."

"Probably," dryly replied the man.

"And you must feel," added Musdemon, "that I owe him a deep debt of gratitude for such a service."

"By the cross of the repentant thief," cried the man,

with a coarse laugh, "to hear you, one would think that the chancellor was doing something quite unusual for you!"

"Well, to be sure, it is no more than strict justice."

"Strict justice! that is the word; but you acknowledge that it is justice. It is the first admission of the kind that I ever heard in the six-and-twenty years that I have followed my profession. Come, sir, we waste our time in idle talk; are you ready?"

"I am," said the delighted Musdæmon, stepping to the door.

"Wait; wait a minute," exclaimed the man in red, stooping to lay his coil of rope on the floor.

Musdæmon paused.

"What are you going to do with all that rope?"

"Your worship may well ask. I know that there is much more than I shall need; but when I began on this affair I thought there would be a great many more prisoners."

"Come, make haste!" said Musdæmon.

"Your worship is in a wonderful hurry. Have you no last favor to ask?"

"None but the one I have already mentioned, that you will thank his Grace for me. For God's sake, make haste!" added Musdæmon; "I long to get away from here. Have we a long journey before us?"

"A long journey!" replied the man in red, straightening himself, and measuring off a few lengths of rope. "The journey will not tire your worship much; for we can make it without leaving this room."

Musdæmon shuddered.

"What do you mean?"

"What do you mean yourself?" asked the man.

"Oh, God!" said Musdæmon, turning pale, "who are you?"

"I am the hangman."

The poor wretch trembled like a dry leaf blown by the wind.

"Did you not come to help me to escape?" he feebly muttered.

The hangman laughed. "Yes, truly! to help you to escape into the spirit-land, whence I warrant you will not be brought back."

Musdæmon grovelled on the floor. "Mercy! Have pity on me! Mercy!"

"I' faith," coldly observed the hangman, "'tis the first time I was ever asked such a thing. Do you take me for the king?"

The unfortunate man dragged himself on his knees, trailing his gown in the dust, beating his head against the floor, and clasping the hangman's feet with muffled groans and broken sobs.

"Come, be quiet!" said the hangman. "I never before saw a black gown kneel to a red jerkin." He kicked the suppliant aside, adding: "Pray to God and the saints, fellow; they will be more apt to hear you than I."

Musdæmon still knelt, his face buried in his hands, weeping bitterly.

Meantime, the hangman, standing on tiptoe, passed his rope through the ring in the ceiling; he let it hang until

it reached the floor, then secured it by a double turn, and made a slip-knot in the end.

"I am ready," said he, when these ominous preparations were over; "are you ready to lay down your life?"

"No!" said Musdæmon, springing up; "no; it cannot be! There is some horrible mistake. Chancellor d'Ahlefeld is not so base; I am too necessary to him. It is impossible that it was for me he sent you. Let me escape; do not fear that the chancellor will be angry."

"Did you not say," replied the executioner, "that you were Turiaf Musdæmon?"

The prisoner hesitated for an instant, then said suddenly: "No, no! my name is not Musdæmon; my name is Turiaf Orugix."

"Orugix!" cried the executioner, "Orugix!"

He snatched off the periwig which concealed the prisoner's face, and uttered an exclamation of surprise: "My brother!"

"Your brother!" replied the prisoner, with a mixture of shame and pleasure; "can you be —"

"Nychol Orugix, hangman for the province of Throndhjem, at your service, brother Turiaf."

The prisoner fell upon the executioner's neck, calling him his brother, his beloved brother. This fraternal recognition would not have gratified any one who witnessed it. Turiaf lavished countless caresses upon Nychol with a forced and timid smile, while Nychol responded with a gloomy and embarrassed look. It was like a tiger fondling an elephant, while the monster's ponderous foot is already planted upon its panting chest.

"What happiness, brother Nychol! I am glad indeed to see you."

"And I am sorry for you, brother Turiaf."

The prisoner pretended not to hear these words, and went on in trembling tones: "You have a wife and children, I suppose? You must take me to see my gentle sister, and let me kiss my dear nephews."

"The Devil fly away with you!" muttered the hangman.

"I will be a second father to them. Hark ye, brother, I am powerful; I have great influence —"

The brother replied with a sinister expression: "I know that you had! At present, you had better be thinking of that which you have doubtless contrived to curry with the saints."

All hope faded from the prisoner's face.

"Good God! what does this mean, dear Nychol? I am safe, since I have found you. Think that the same mother bore us; that we played together as children. Remember, Nychol, you are my brother!"

"You never remembered it until now," replied the brutal Nychol.

"No, I cannot die by my brother's hand!"

"It is your own fault, Turiaf. It was you who ruined my career; who prevented me from becoming royal executioner at Copenhagen; who caused me to be sent into this miserable region as a petty provincial hangman. If you had not been a bad brother, you would have no cause to complain of that which distresses you so much now. I should not be in Throndhjem, and some one else would

have to finish your business. Now, enough, brother, you must die."

Death is hideous to the wicked for the same reason that it is beautiful to the good; both must put off their humanity, but the just man is delivered from his body as from a prison, while the wicked man is torn from it as from a jail. At the last moment hell yawns before the sinful soul which has dreamed of annihilation. It knocks anxiously at the dark portals of death; and it is not annihilation that answers.

The prisoner rolled upon the floor and wrung his hands, with moans more heart-rending than the everlasting wail of the damned.

"God have mercy! Holy angels in heaven, if you exist, have pity upon me! Nychol, brother Nychol, in our mother's name, oh, let me live!"

The hangman held out his warrant.

"I cannot; the order is peremptory."

"That warrant is not for me," stammered the despairing prisoner; "it is for one Musdæmon. That is not I; I am Turiaf Orugix."

"You jest," said Nychol, shrugging his shoulders. "I know perfectly well that it is meant for you. Besides," he added roughly, "yesterday you would not have been Turiaf Orugix to your brother; to-day he can only look upon you as Turiaf Musdæmon."

"Brother, brother!" groaned the wretch, "only wait until to-morrow! It is impossible that the chancellor could have given the order for my death; it is some frightful mistake. Count d'Ahlefeld loves me dearly. Dear

Nychol, I implore you, spare my life ! I shall soon be restored to favor, and I will do whatever you may ask — ”

“ You can do me but one service, Turiaf,” broke in the hangman. “ I have lost two executions already upon which I counted the most, those of ex-chancellor Schumacker and the viceroy’s son. I am always unlucky. You and Hans of Iceland are all that are left. Your execution, being secret and by night, is worth at least twelve gold ducats to me. Let me hang you peaceably, that is the only favor I ask of you.”

“ Oh, God ! ” sighed the prisoner.

“ It will be the first and last, in good sooth ; but, in return, I promise that you shall not suffer. I will hang you like a brother ; submit to your fate.”

Musdæmon sprang to his feet ; his nostrils were distended with rage ; his livid lips quivered ; his teeth chattered ; his mouth foamed with despair.

“ Satan ! I saved that d’Ahlefeld ; I have embraced my brother, — and they murder me ! And I must die this very night in a dark dungeon, where none can hear my curses ; where I may not cry out against them from one end of the kingdom to the other ; where I may not tear asunder the veil that hides their crimes ! Was it for such a death that I have stained my entire life ? Wretch ! ” he added, turning to his brother, “ would you become a fratricide ? ”

“ I am the executioner,” answered the phlegmatic Nychol.

“ No ! ” exclaimed the prisoner ; and he flung himself headlong upon the executioner, his eyes darting flame and

streaming with tears, like those of a bull at bay, — “no, I will not die thus meekly ; I have not lived like a poisonous serpent to die like a paltry worm trampled under foot ! I will leave my life in my last sting ; but it shall be mortal.”

So saying, he grappled like a bitter foe with him whom he had just embraced as a brother ; the fulsome, flattering Musdæmon now showed his true spirit. Despair stirred up the foul dregs of his soul ; and after crawling prostrate like a tiger, like a tiger he sprang upon his enemy. It would have been hard to decide which of the two brothers was the most appalling, as they struggled, one with the brute ferocity of a wild beast, the other with the artful fury of a demon.

But the four halberdiers, hitherto passive spectators, did not remain motionless. They lent their aid to the executioner ; and soon Musdæmon, whose rage was his only strength, was forced to quit his hold. He dashed himself against the wall, uttering inarticulate yells, and blunting his nails upon the stone.

“To die ! Devils in hell, to die ! My shrieks unheard outside this roof, my arms powerless to tear down these walls !”

He was seized, but offered no resistance ; his useless efforts had exhausted him. He was stripped of his gown, and bound ; at this moment a sealed packet fell from his bosom.

“What is that ?” said the hangman.

An infernal light gleamed in the prisoner’s haggard eyes. He muttered : “How could I forget that ? Look

here, brother Nychol," he added in an almost friendly tone; "these papers belong to the lord chancellor. Promise to give them to him, and you may do what you will with me."

"Since you are quiet now, I promise to grant your last wish, although you have been a bad brother to me. I will see that the chancellor has the papers, on the honor of an Orugix."

"Ask leave to hand them to him yourself," replied the prisoner, smiling at the executioner, who, from his nature, had little understanding of smiles. "The pleasure which they will afford his Grace may lead him to confer some favor on you."

"Really, brother?" said Orugix. "Thank you! Perhaps he will make me executioner royal after all, eh? Well, let us part good friends! I forgive you all the scratches which you gave me; forgive me for the hempen collar which I must give you."

"The chancellor promised me a very different sort of collar," said Musdæmon.

Then the halberdiers led him, bound, into the middle of the cell; the hangman placed the fatal noose round his neck.

"Are you ready, Turiaf?"

"One moment! one moment!" said the prisoner, whose terror had revived; "for mercy's sake, brother, do not pull the rope until I tell you to do so!"

"I do not need to pull it," answered the hangman.

A moment later he repeated his question: "Are you ready?"

"One moment more! Alas! must I die?"

"Turiaf, I have no time to waste."

So saying, Orugix signed to the halberdiers to stand away from the prisoner.

"One word more, brother; do not forget to give the packet to Count d'Ahlefeld."

"Never fear," replied Nychol. He added for the third time: "Come, are you ready?"

The unfortunate man opened his lips, perhaps to plead for another brief delay, when the impatient hangman stooped and turned a brass button projecting from the floor.

The plank gave way beneath the victim; the poor wretch disappeared through a square trap-door with a dull twang from the rope, which was stretched suddenly and vibrated fearfully with the dying man's final convulsions.

Nothing was seen but the rope swinging to and fro in the dark opening, through which came a cool breeze and a sound as of running water.

The halberdiers themselves shrank back, horror-stricken. The hangman approached the abyss, seized the rope, which still vibrated, and swung himself into the hole, pressing both feet against his victim's shoulders; the fatal rope stretched to its utmost with a creak, and stood still. A stifled sob rose from the trap.

"All is over," said the hangman, climbing back into the cell. "Farewell, brother!"

He drew a cutlass from his belt. "Go feed the fishes in the fjord. Your body to the waves; your soul to the flames!"

With these words, he cut the taut rope. The fragment

still fastened to the iron ring lashed the ceiling, while the deep, dark waters splashed high as the body fell, then swept on their underground course.

The hangman closed the trap as he had opened it; as he rose, he saw that the room was full of smoke.

"What is all this?" he asked the halberdiers. "Where does this smoke come from?"

They knew no better than he. In surprise, they opened the door; the corridors were also filled with thick and nauseating smoke. A secret outlet led them, greatly terrified, to the square courtyard, where a fearful sight met their gaze.

A vast conflagration, fanned by a violent east wind, was consuming the military prison and the barracks. The flames, driven in eddying whirls, climbed stone walls, crowned burning roofs, leaped from gaping window-frames; and the black towers of Munkholm now shone in a red and ominous light, now vanished in a dense cloud of smoke.

A turnkey, who was escaping by the courtyard, told them hastily that the fire had broken out in the monster's cell during the sleep of Hans of Iceland's keepers, he having been imprudently allowed to have a fire and straw.

"How unlucky I am!" cried Orugix, when he heard this story; "now I suppose Hans of Iceland has slipped through my hands too. The rascal must have been burned; and I sha'n't even get his body, for which I paid two ducats!"

Meantime, the unfortunate Munkholm musketeers, roused suddenly from their sleep by imminent death, crowded toward the door only to find it closely barred.

Their shrieks of anguish and despair were heard outside ; they stood at the blazing windows, wringing their hands, or dashed themselves madly upon the flagging of the court, escaping one death to meet another. The victorious flames devoured the entire structure before the rest of the garrison could come to the rescue.

All help was vain. Luckily, the building stood by itself. The door was broken in with hatchets, but it was too late ; for as it opened, the burning roof and floors gave way, and fell upon the unfortunate men with a loud crash.

The entire building disappeared in a whirlwind of fiery dust and burning smoke, which stifled the faint moans of the expiring men.

Next morning nothing was left in the courtyard but four high walls, black and smoking, around a horrid mass of smouldering ruins still devouring each other like wild beasts in a circus.

When the pile had cooled, it was searched. Beneath a heap of stones and iron beams, twisted out of shape by the flames, was found a mass of whitened bones and disfigured corpses ; with some thirty soldiers, most of whom were crippled, this was all that remained of the crack regiment of Munkholm.

When the site of the prison was searched, and they reached the fatal cell where the fire had broken out, and where Hans of Iceland had been imprisoned, they found the remains of a human body close beside an iron pan and a heap of broken chains. It was curious that among these ashes there were two skulls, although there was but one skeleton.

LI.

Saladin. Bravo, Ibrahim ! you are indeed the messenger of good fortune ; I thank you for your joyful tidings.

The Mameluke. Well, is that all ?

Saladin. What did you expect ?

The Mameluke. Nothing more for the messenger of good fortune.

LESSING : *Nathan the Wise.*

PALE and worn, Count d'Ahlefeld strode up and down his apartment ; in his hand he crushed a bundle of letters which he had just read, while he stamped his foot on the smooth marble floor and the gold-fringed rugs.

At the other end of the room, in an attitude of deep respect, stood Nychol Orugix in his infamous scarlet dress, felt hat in hand.

"You have done me good service, Musdemon," hissed the chancellor.

The hangman looked up timidly : "Is your Grace pleased ?"

"What do you want here ?" said the chancellor, turning upon him suddenly.

The hangman, proud that he had won a glance from the chancellor, smiled hopefully.

"What do I want, your Grace ? The post of executioner at Copenhagen, if your Grace will deign to bestow so great a favor on me in return for the good news I have brought you."

The chancellor called to the two halberdiers on guard at his door: "Seize this rascal; he annoys me by his impudence."

The guards led away the amazed and confounded Nychol, who ventured one word more: "My lord —"

"You are no longer hangman for the province of Throndhjem; I deprive you of your office!" cried the chancellor, slamming the door.

The chancellor returned to his letters, angrily read and re-read them, maddened by his dishonor; for these were the letters which once passed between the countess and Musdæmon. This was Elphega's handwriting. He found that Ulrica was not his daughter; that, it might be, the Frederic whom he mourned was not his son. The unhappy count was punished through that same pride which had caused all his crimes. He cared not now if vengeance evaded him; all his ambitious dreams vanished, — his past was blasted, his future dead. He had striven to destroy his enemies; he had only succeeded in losing his own reputation, his adviser, and even his marital and paternal rights.

But he must see once more the wretched woman who had betrayed him. He hastily crossed the spacious apartment, shaking the letters in his hand as if they were a thunderbolt. He threw open the door of Elphega's room; he entered —

The guilty wife had just unexpectedly learned from Colonel Væthain of her son Frederic's fearful death. The poor mother was insane.



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CONCLUSION.

What I said in jest, you took seriously. — *Old Spanish Romance (King Alfonso to Bernard)*.

FOR a fortnight the events which we have just related formed the sole topic of conversation in the town and province of Throndhjem, judged from the various standpoints of the various speakers. The people of the town, who had waited in vain to see seven successive executions, began to despair of ever having that pleasure; and purblind old women declared that, on the night of the lamentable fire at the barracks, they had seen Hans of Iceland fly up in the flames, laughing amid the blaze, as he dashed the burning roof of the building upon the Munkholm musketeers; when, after an absence which to his Ethel seemed an age, Ordener returned to the Lion of Schleswig tower, accompanied by General Levin de Knud and Chaplain Athanasius Munder.

Schumacker was walking in the garden, leaning on his daughter. The young couple found it hard not to rush into each other's arms; but they were forced to be content with a look. Schumacker affectionately grasped Ordener's hand, and greeted the two strangers in a friendly manner.

"Young man," said the aged captive, "may Heaven bless your return!"

"Sir," replied Ordener, "I have just arrived. Having seen my father at Bergen, I would now embrace my father at Munkholm."

"What do you mean?" asked the old man, in great surprise.

"That you must give me your daughter, noble sir."

"My daughter!" exclaimed the prisoner, turning to the confused and blushing Ethel.

"Yes, my lord, I love your Ethel. I have devoted my life to her; she is mine."

Schumacker's face clouded: "You are a brave and noble youth, my son. Although your father has done me much harm, I forgive him for your sake; and I should be glad to sanction this marriage. But there is an obstacle —"

"What is it, sir?" asked Ordener, anxiously.

"You love my daughter; but are you sure that she loves you?"

The two lovers cast at each other a rapid glance of mute amazement.

"Yes," continued the father. "I am sorry; for I love you, and would gladly call you son. But my daughter would never consent. She has recently confessed her aversion for you, and since your departure she is silent whenever I speak of you, and seems to avoid all thought of you as if you were odious to her. You must give up your love for her, Ordener. Never fear; love may be cured as well as hatred."

"My lord!" exclaimed the astonished Ordener.

"Father!" cried Ethel, clasping her hands.

"Do not be alarmed, my daughter," interrupted the old man; "I approve of this marriage, but you do not. I will never force your inclinations, Ethel. This last fortnight has wrought a great change in me; you are free to choose for yourself."

Athanasius Munder smiled. "She is not," he said.

"You are mistaken, dear father," added Ethel, taking courage; "I do not hate Ordener."

"What!" cried her father.

"I am —" resumed Ethel. She hesitated.

Ordener knelt at the old man's feet.

"She is my wife, father! Forgive me as my other father has forgiven me, and bless your children."

Schumacker, surprised in his turn, blessed the young couple.

"I have cursed so many people in my lifetime," said he, "that I now seize every opportunity for blessing. But explain."

All was made clear to him. He wept with emotion, gratitude, and love.

"I thought myself wise; I am old, and I did not understand the heart of a young girl!"

"And so I am Mrs. Ordener Guldenlew!" said Ethel, with child-like delight.

"Ordener Guldenlew," rejoined old Schumacker, "you are a better man than I, for in the day of my prosperity I would never have stooped to wed the penniless and disgraced daughter of an unfortunate prisoner."

The general took the old man's hand, and offered

him a roll of parchment, saying : " Do not speak thus, Count. Here are your titles, which the king long since sent you by Dispolsen ; his Majesty now adds a free pardon. Such is the dowry of your daughter, Countess Danneskiold."

" Pardon ! freedom !" repeated the enraptured Ethel.

" Countess Danneskiold !" added her father.

" Yes, Count," continued the general ; " your honors and estates are restored."

" To whom do I owe all this ?" asked the happy Schumacker.

" To General Levin de Knud," answered Ordener.

" Levin de Knud ! Did I not tell you, Governor, that Levin de Knud was the best of men ? But why did he not bring me the good news himself ? Where is he ?"

Ordener pointed in surprise to the smiling, weeping general : " Here !"

The recognition of the two who had been comrades in the days of their youth and power was a touching one. Schumacker's heart swelled. His acquaintance with Hans had destroyed his hatred of men ; his acquaintance with Ordener and Levin taught him to love them.

The gloomy wedding in the cell was soon celebrated by brilliant festivities. Life smiled upon the young couple who had smiled at death. Count d'Ahlefeld saw that they were happy ; this was his most cruel punishment.

Athanasius Munder shared their joy. He obtained the pardon of his twelve convicts, and Ordener added that of his former companions in misfortune, Jonas and Norbith,

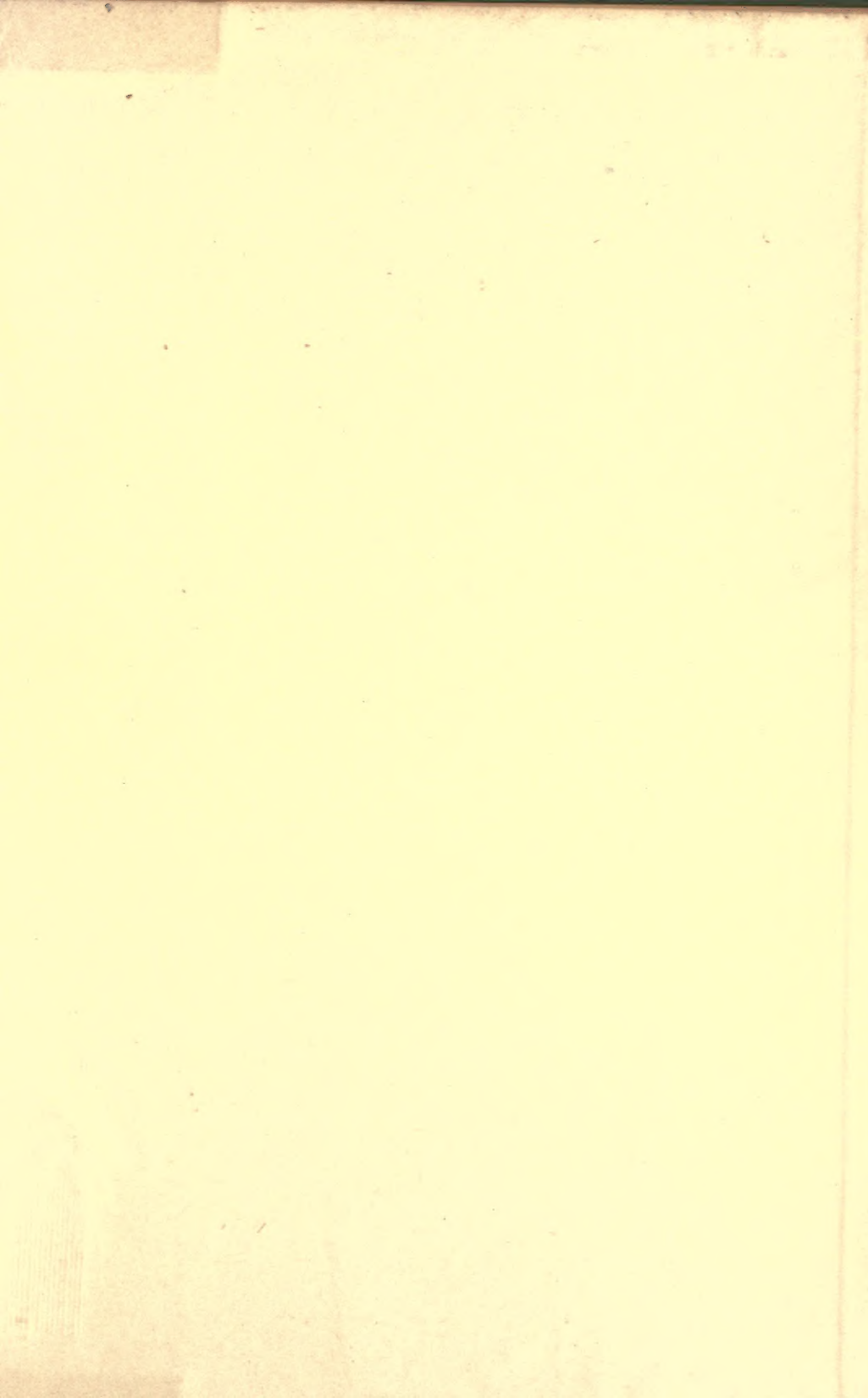
who returned, free and happy, to inform the appeased miners that the king released them from the protectorate.

Schumacker did not long enjoy the union of Ethel and Ordener. Liberty and happiness were too much for him ; he went to enjoy a different happiness and a different freedom. He died that same year, 1699, his children accepting this blow as a warning that there is no perfect bliss in this world. He was buried in Veer Church, upon an estate in Jutland belonging to his son-in-law, and his tomb preserves all the titles of which captivity deprived him. From the marriage of Ordener and Ethel sprang the race of the counts of Danneskiold.

THE END.







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